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THE SIX SISTERS OF THE VALLEYS.

An Historical Romance,

FOUNDED ON THE HISTORY OF THE WALDENSIAN CHURCH

DURING THE YEAR 1655, COMMONLY CALLED

"THE YEAR OF MASSACRES."



CROMWELL.—“ I will send a fleet over those Alps, if need be, to teach our brother of Savoy reason.”

THE
SIX SISTERS OF THE VALLEYS.

In Historical Romance.

BY THE
REV. WILLIAM BRAMLEY-MOORE, M.A.,
INCUMBENT OF GERRARD'S CROSS, BUCKS.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS DRAWN BY T. H. NICHOLSON, ENGRAVED
BY C. W. SHEERES.

“ . . . οὐ γὰρ ξίφεσιν ἢ βέλεσιν οὐδὲ διὰ στρατιωτῶν ἡ ἀλήθεια καταγγέλλεται,
ἀλλὰ πειθοῖ καὶ συμβουλίᾳ.”—ATHANASIUS, A.D. 350.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
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VOL. III.
THE MOUNTAINS.

THE
SIX SISTERS OF THE VALLEYS.

CHAPTER I.

THE EVERLASTING MOUNTAINS.

YE everlasting mountains, ye immemorial tremblings of the rough-hewn earth, ye records of an unfathomed past, what mighty influences have ye had on the destinies of the human race ! The tyrants of mankind would raze your ramparts, ye coverts for the victims of their wrath. But for you, liberty had perished from the earth. Hither the patriot flies when his country has been crushed beneath the despot's heel ; in your caverns the persecuted saint finds a shrine when the church of his fathers smoulders in the wind ; upon your crags the apostles of

liberty plant their banners, when death were their portion in the plains beneath.

Man rears his massive blocks to be the grave of freedom, and the sepulchre of thought and mind ; but the battlements which God has bidden the earth upheave herself, environ liberty and are the sanctuary of truth.

Hail, blessed liberty ! descending from heaven, thou dost alight on those parts of the earth which are nearest to thy birth-place ! Let thine empire be the world, but let thy throne be the mountain glen, which was thy shrine when the earth was armed against thee. We seek thee not under the bloody guillotine, but rather amid the bloodless snow which descends among the valleys of the Alps.

The dashing eagle, scatheless by the avalanche, the wayward chamois, free upon the ice field, are types of liberty : the foaming torrent, begotten of the mist and glacier, the uprooted pine, athwart the

volleying spray, speak of liberty: the shattered crag, split from yon eyrie, and strewn broadcast in the valley, is nature's homage to liberty: yon serried wayward summits which pierce the sky, point upwards to the true temple of liberty: yea, ye glorious mountains, ye speak to the heart of man, and ye speak of liberty and God.

And ye Alps, with your everlasting glaciers, your arrowy pinnacles, your mythic caverns and your escarped gorges, ye have been bulwarks against Rome's oppression; ye have many a mountain pass and many a bare block of limestone environed by the brightest memories of man's history, his struggles for purity of faith and liberty of conscience.

Ye mountains, whose slopes embody nature, from the arctic lichen to the purple grape and southern olive, it is this moral charm which makes you distinctive among a thousand kindred groups. You have

been the asylum of truth, and though you shall hereafter crumble into scattered dust, the truth you shielded shall remain for ever.

But for you this struggling band of martyrs had long since perished; your fastnesses protected them, your caverns gave them hearths and altars, your rocks fought for them, even as the stars in their courses fought against Sisera; and around whatever crags, from the blue inland sea to the plains of Hungary, history and tradition have cast their enchantments, none glow with holier memories of religion, truth, and liberty, than those of Angrogna, Lucerna, and Perouse.

Hail, then, ye bulwarks of liberty, which God erected against Papal Rome, that city of the Plain!

It is the night; in her silence nature is eloquent, and teems with the past. I view yon valleys in the dewy moonlight, I look along that line of crags, I mark the bends

in yon river, I count the spurs of those ridges, as they shoot into the mid valley, and the chasing phantoms of history flit before my mind.

Those meadows, from which the dank dews of evening are ascending, and casting a fragile circlet on that isolated peak, have been the battle-field of nations. In that secluded dell have rung the shout of battle and the shock of arms, when French, Irish, Italian, Spaniard, Swiss, Bavarian, have swayed to and fro with the tide of war.

I stand where martyrs stood, I tread where heroes trod, I feel the spell of the great and good, in genius and in suffering.

Suffering! it has, like genius, its inspirations. The heart throbs when brought into contact with suffering, for the mystic fear of that dread fellowship pierces the secret recesses of the soul.

Look at these valleys! Read not their legends, but their histories. Behold yon dazzling snow, now silvered by the moon,

the dark red blots of the infant's blood have stained that virgin hue. Behold yon waterfall, leaping with the thunders of freedom, it has roared over the corpse of the youth who had played on its brink from childhood, but who perished by the sword of the Church of Rome. Mark yon river, seaming the valley with its sparkling track, it has borne the ashes of the martyr, and gurgled over heaps which the Vatican had slain.

Survey yon crags and gorges, they have witnessed the deeds of heroes, out-vying those of Greece and Rome, and which, if vouchsafed one page of classic history, would have been the theme of eternal song.

Retrace centuries; when the Arian Goth flooded Italy, the truths which Paul spake on Mars Hill clung to these rocks; when the Moslem threatened to supplant the Cross by the Crescent, the saving doctrines of the Gospel mingled with these

mountain breezes ; when the black wave of ignorance and superstition submerged Europe, behold this island of light—for when gross darkness covered the nations, the people that dwelt here saw a great light.

In the lone cottage in Angrogna's glen, centuries before Tyndale, was the word of God rehearsed from mouth to mouth.

Behold in these valleys the rocky cradle of truth, against which Rome hath fought for centuries, but against which she has fought in vain. To you, ye Alps, shall be given voices in the day of judgment. Break forth, ye mountains, ye forests, with every tree that is therein ; ye everlasting hills, keep not silent, denounce the deeds of blood of the accursed city.

Look at this scene ! To the external eye, Nature is unchanged. Those crags stand forth as when Cattané and De la Trinité marched to blood : the Church of Rome is unchanged, a pledged foe to light, liberty, and truth : the religion of these

valleys is unchanged ; for the Fathers have declared to their sons the same truths which rivet them to Apostles.

Changes have swept over Europe, social, political, military. The conquerors have advanced and fled, armies have melted away, kingdoms have waxed and waned, dynasties have sunk into the *débris* of mankind ; but as a silent pledge of an unchanging future, these valleys have remained unchanged in faith, because they have abided under the shadow of the Almighty, in very truth “His Israel of the Alps.”

CHAPTER II.

THE SLOPES OF THE VANDALIN.

THE shadows of night still overcast the mountain, as Echard and Ardoine ascended the steep slopes of the Vandalin, in the direction of Castelluzzo. Ardoine leaned from time to time on Echard as if, amid the visions of the harrowing past, she would assure herself of the reality of a brighter present. Nor could Echard resist giving himself up to the enrapturing communion of love, sweeter from the painful memories of the past, and from the apprehension of a perilous future.

“Ardoine,” whispered Echard, as he led her over an Alpine bridge of pines,

rudely cast across the stream, "how can I tell you what my feelings have been? I am almost bewildered by this sudden transition from misery to happiness. My heart was wrung with agony in my dungeon; not because I was a prisoner, or that I knew I was doomed to death, but because you were lost. I had previously trembled at the bare thought of such a calamity, and the knowledge of the fact drove me almost to madness. You were a prisoner, and might be tortured; death was your probable fate, and I felt that you would naturally brand me as your betrayer, and as the cause of your misfortunes."

"Echard, I too have suffered in many ways, which I cannot relate, but bitter was it when doubts about your honour were forced upon my mind; for though my heart pleaded in your behalf, yet appearances were against you."

"They were indeed, but, as you now understand, I was myself a victim."

“Yes, yes, through what you did at La Baudène; it was your generous kindness to me which was the beginning of your troubles.”

“Say not so, dear Ardoine. But how you tremble. Is it because you see me still wearing the uniform of Savoy?”

“It was not because of that, for your acts have proved the sincerity of your heart, but I could not help trembling when I remembered that you were a member of the Church of Rome, which has wreaked her cruel——. And yet I owe you a great debt of gratitude.”

“Dear Ardoine, speak not thus; believe me a change has taken place within me. Cannot you trust me when you look at the past, and read its misconceptions? Though there is one point which I cannot solve, how Malvicino should have become acquainted with our plan, and have attempted to capture you.”

“It is strange,” replied Ardoine,

thoughtfully ; “I am sure I saw your sword before I ventured forth. It was he who cast me on the terrible Gehenna, and it was your entrance which saved me from actual torture.”

“Can you remember at all what your feelings were as you lay on the rack?”

“I felt,” answered Ardoine solemnly, “the presence of God in a way I never felt before. Heaven was open to me, my Saviour waiting to receive me, and his love filled my soul. I felt that peace of God which passeth understanding, and was able to commune with my Saviour. My heart did tremble at times, but the Lord strengthened my faith, and it failed not.”

“Could you—did you think of me at all then?” asked Echard, in a voice almost inaudible from emotion.

“I could not help it,” artlessly replied the young girl.

“Nor did I forget you in my dungeon; my last thought would have been God’s,

my last but one yours. Oh! Ardoine, let me hear truth from your lips, repeat to me once more the sweet assurance of your love, which is like a solitary star in an otherwise clouded heaven."

"Nay, Echard, I have not been brought up in courts and cities, I am but a mountain girl; but it is not for me to be so ready with professions of love."

"Pardon my boldness, yet I feel that an hour of such experiences as we have had must make our hearts understand each other better than ten years of formal knowledge. There is nothing I value on earth without your love; may I cherish the hope that we may become one in faith and in love?"

"You may hope," replied Ardoine blushing. "But Echard, Echard," added she, hastily checking herself, "Oh tell me if you are still a Roman Catholic? Deal candidly with me. Did I not hear something from you as I lay on the rack, which cheered my heart?"

“Ardoine, ever since I saw you first, my convictions of the truth of your creed have been deepening. It pleased God to give me light even in my dungeon, for I found written on the wall, ‘The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.’ This helped to confirm what I had heard from you before.”

“Oh ! it is a beautiful text,” interrupted Ardoine. “Ah !” continued she, with a sigh, “I remember when dear grandfather preached on it. It was one of the last sermons he was able to preach. I was a little child, and he kissed me so sweetly when he came home because I recollected the text, and could repeat it by heart.”

“I remember you quoted this,” rejoined Echard, “when I met you at La Baudène. Those simple words remained graven on my heart, and echoed in my ears when I was taken into the dungeon, as I thought, for torture or death.”

“Alas ! do not talk of that scene,” ex-

claimed Ardoine, shuddering, "it is like a dreadful vision, which crushes my heart."

"Oh! how agonized I was to see you," continued Echard; "my worst fears were realized, and you must have been overwhelmed with astonishment at hearing my voice."

"It sounded in my ears at first like a death-knell, but it explained so much; I saw that you were not my betrayer, and I heard that you were not the Marquis's son."

"O Father of heaven!" exclaimed Echard, "what mystery hangs over me? I saw some one in prison whom I loved, something like you, with pensive lustrous eyes, but dressed in black."

"That must have been my dear Aunt Martha. Oh! where is she?"

"I do not know where she is, but I released her at the risk of my life; so you may judge whether my heart is true to your cause or not."

“God bless you!” whispered Ardoine, involuntarily pressing his arm to her side.

“The scenes of that room still haunt me, and it would chill your blood did I tell you what I saw. But we have reached the crest of this ridge. This seems to be a safe place, and there is this great fragment of rock which will shelter us. There is La Tour and the Convent, from which we have escaped. Can you not see its tower, and the smoke rising from its chimneys?”

“Echard!” exclaimed Ardoine, bursting into tears, “my heart breaks. Oh where is my home, my home, where I was brought up, and where we all lived so happily together? Where are they all now?—some have been killed. Alas! why do I survive?”

“I must turn comforter, Ardoine, and bid you confide in God. Look, the sun is just rising, to bless the human race; but let us remember that there is a heaven above us where Christ reigns, who suf-

ferred greater things than these for our sakes.”

“O my mother, your grave is there! I am looking afar off at the spot where you lie, buried in the ruins of our beloved home; O my God, I am an orphan!”

“Ardoine, I am with you—my heart is yours. There let me clasp your hand, as we kneel in the sight of heaven, and let us thank God for his past help, and pray Him, for Christ’s sake, to be with us for the future.”

CHAPTER III.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH OF APRIL, 1655.

It is the morning of Saturday, Easter Eve, the 24th of April, 1655. The sun is rising upon Italy. Its bright beams shoot through the filmy mist, which hangs like a coronet on the small conical hill of Cavour, that solitary redoubt erected by nature for the protection of the valley of Lucerna. The snowy Alps seem whiter than before, in the fresh transparency of the dewy morning, and lead our thoughts back to the time, when first the new-made light glistened on the snows of earth. Peak after peak is lit up by the advancing streaks; the grey shadows have become suffused

with a silvery tinge, then anon the colours deepen into the roseate tint, as if Nature's chastity blushed to be revealed by daylight; then again a vast mantle of crimson is flung on granite or on snow, changing from hue to hue; now mellowed in softest purple, now brightened with amber light, now wreathing the snowy crests with flames of fire. The crags of Castelluzzo have lost their ruggedness in the magic mellowing of the morning light, and detached fragments of fleecy mist hover thereon, feebly urged on by an unseen breath, which gently sways the forest of firs, and adds motion to the otherwise still landscape.

It is the spring—the spring of Italy! The resurrection of nature is taking place, when God renews the face of the earth. The vine is bursting; it will soon clothe its poplars, and weave together its arching festoons, under which the blithe husband-man will reap his harvest. The harebell droops steeped with the dews of night,

each blade of grass twinkles with its own prismatic drop, and is freshened by the invisible showers of paradise; for the dew, like novelty, gives charm and freshness to what was beautiful before. In that crisp morning air, as Nature is unswathing her winter cerements, as the breeze floats by us laden with the memories of Eden, we feel that existence is a pleasure as well as a probation.

What loveliness inlays the scene! In her dullest moods Nature is wonderful; how much more when she displays herself, in her queenly purity, exulting in her birth-right of beauty, liberty and peace. She is an eternal poem, a silent tributary hymn of praise to the Invisible, who made man her interpreter and priest to vocalise her homage, and send it throbbing with love to the throne of heaven. What suggestions has such a scene for a soul versed in communings with nature and with God! And yet the appearance of the outer world varies as our state of soul, for the mind loves

to see its own image externally, by its inherent desire to reproduce itself.

Nature, I love thee! I can feel the romance both of history and nature, for they embalm each other. The history of man stirs my soul to wonder, yet it crushes me with doubt and fear, but thou art a link of wonder and of peace, of mystery and joy. I love thy free glens, thy pure snows, thy crashing rocks, thy dreary caverns, thy embattled icefields. Hail vicegerent of heaven! simple in thy modesty, sublime in thy royalty. When I behold thee my heart heaves, and I rise above the scene; then the soft protest of the tinkling bell recalls my soul to earth, swayed with thy lofty inspirations. Nature! I joy in thee, for through thee I commune with eternity, with worlds unseen, and with God Himself!

There is life! the chirp of the grasshopper, the lonely cadence of the nightingale in the grove upon the slopes beneath, the music of the sheep-bell, the faint

thunders of the stern torrent from yon black ravine, are sufficient to announce that Nature's repose is one of beauty and strength and not of death. The cattle are lowing on the upland hill, the stroke of the woodman's axe rings in Angrogna's glen, the flocks issue from the rude fence which surrounds the *châlet*, the buoyant shepherdess carols her fitful song braced by the elastic air. In her silence Nature speaks of peace ; in her distant sounds from the plains beneath, of industry ; in her sunshine, of heaven, and of the life thereof, which is love.

And if Nature, with her mute eloquence, spake of peace and love, so did the ritual of that Church which overspread the greater part of Europe. But the day before ten thousand churches in sunny Italy had pealed with the most sublime strains in memory of Messiah's death, the most unexampled act of love of which the archangel in his wanderings through space has ever

heard. But yesterday millions went to Christian temples to hear the most affecting recital extant in the world, and to meditate on the wondrous death-speeches of that adorable Saviour. Cardinals, archbishops, bishops, abbots, friars, monks, priests, had chanted the gospel written by the beloved disciple, the apostle of love. They had assembled to contemplate the Son of God agonizing for their soul's salvation, and for the redemption of the world. No hostile expression could they find in those guileless lips; never could they cite the occasion when those pierced hands had grasped the sword to secure a follower; never could they detect a trace of persecution in the teaching of Him who came to overthrow the religious systems of the world.

At this very moment, the Founder of this sublime religion, was, in the memory and meditation of the Church, lying in his tomb for the full accomplishment of his work. On the morrow that Church would

be called to triumphant joy because that bruised form had rent in twain the grave, and come forth as God, to extend his empire of love, and to win sons and daughters by the memories of his cross. On the morrow would the recognized temporal and spiritual Head of this mighty section of Christians stand in the balcony of a southern temple, and, stretching out the hands of a Christian Bishop towards heaven, cast the blessing of an old man on the human race.

On the morrow would the guns of St. Angelo ring out the fact that Christ's Vicar had blessed the people, that is, we presume, breathed again the words of his Master, and whispered love to friend and foe.

Such were the associations and memories which clustered round that Saturday, the 24th of April; such was the mute attitude of nature, in her maidenly beauty, expostulating with the wicked, supplicating for the good, and turning the eyes and hearts of all upwards to the throne of God.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SIGNAL.

ECHARD turned his eyes on to the valley as he supported the fainting Ardoine, and beheld the mountains and the plains of Italy with unrestrained transport, heightened by the remembrance of the grim dungeon walls. The Pelice seemed reduced to a thread of light, now for a time eclipsed behind the buildings of La Tour, then gradually merged into the dim distance until its union with the Po.

The convent and the mission house could be readily discerned among the buildings of the Waldensian capital; while, at some distance from the town, the turrets of the Marquis of Angrogna's castle were bright

in an isolated shaft of morning sunshine. Beyond San Giovanni, Fenil, Bubiano, Bricherasco, and many other hamlets like white gleaming specks studded the horizon. On the left side the hills of Angrogna rose dotted with cottages and farms, and at considerable intervals with the campaniles of the Waldensian temples just distinguishable amid the clustering trees. On the right, range piled behind range, towered the giant Alps, forming, with their lateral valleys, the south side of the valley of Lucerna.

“Look, look,” suddenly exclaimed Echard, shading his eyes with his left hand, and pointing eagerly in the direction of La Tour; “it goes up. Lord of heaven! is it possible?”

“What is it that you mean?” rejoined Ardoine, terrified by his tone of horror; “I see nothing.”

“I see it! I see it! Merciful Heaven, is it then about to come to pass? Blot out my unwilling share in this design of hell.”

“ Oh! explain, explain yourself,” exclaimed his agitated companion, as she clasped his arm with both her hands.

“ There, look!—do you not see the Convent of La Tour, from which we have escaped?”

“ Yes, I see it,” whispered Ardoine, trembling from head to foot, “ and I see what looks like something black moving up and down.”

“ Alas! you know not its meaning. It was not there a minute ago. It has just been hoisted up. Hark, there is the distant sound of the convent bell; it is four o’clock; the hour upon which the Council of the Propaganda determined for their crusade. I shudder when I remember their deliberations, which I heard, but against which my feelings revolted. I thank God I have taken no part in them. And now that I have gained more knowledge, I would rather cast in my lot with the persecuted than the persecutors. Look! the flag goes

down ; if I mistake not, you will see it again in a moment."

The black flag disappeared three times, and then remained on the highest point floating in the breeze.

"They have lowered it three times in the name of the Holy Trinity," continued Echard ; "such blasphemy is akin to such cruelty. Ardoine, that flag is the signal."

"The signal of what?"

"Of what I warned you ; of a massacre which I fear will deluge your valleys with blood. It is Saturday, Easter Eve, the 24th of April. It is four in the morning. Did I not hint to you my suspicions when I met you at La Baudène ? Thank God that I have saved you, and that I take no part in these wholesale murders."

"O my Saviour ! my Saviour !" gasped Ardoine, sinking to the ground, on which she would have fallen had not Echard caught her in his arms. Laying her carefully on the grass, he bent over her with

affection and alarm, and having unloosed her kerchief, brought some water in his hand from the adjoining stream, which he sprinkled over her face.

“Better water than blood,” murmured he, as he looked on that beautiful face on which the hue of death seemed imprinted. “Strange,” soliloquized he, “that after my experiences of life I should feel so drawn to these persecuted people, and that my prospects and habits of thought should have undergone so great a change in so short a time. I think she is recovering. I should feel the loss of her more than that of position and riches, for I have found in her affection that secret companionship for which I have long pined in vain.”

Gradually recovering her senses, Ardoine looked vacantly around her, until her eye rested on Echard, whose presence brought her back to the consciousness of her position.

“Oh ! Echard, what has happened? Did

I hear aright what you said? I dreamed that my aunts were killed. Is it true?"

"Alas! dear Ardoine, would that it were a dream! There lean on me, let me fetch you some water. Your eyes seem fixed. Now do not look in that direction."

"There," exclaimed Ardoine, unconscious of Echard's entreaties, "there is the flag quite distinct in the sunshine; I see it trembling in the breeze. What Echard hinted at La Baudène is true. O my mother, would that one grave contained us both!"

"Ardoine, Ardoine, our troubles are indeed grievous, but we may be thankful that we have escaped death and are free. I will shield you, and shed my last drop of blood for your sake. I love you, and will do my utmost to make amends for the terrific past."

"Oh, and my dear aunts, where are you? My little Etienne, Bertin, Merle and Lena, what may happen to you? All cannot escape! Some of them will be killed! Oh agony to

think of our home being a ruin, and our valleys deluged with our blood!—What is that?—I think I hear the shots of an arquebus. Echard, Echard, look yonder across the valley—there—in that knot of trees—I see figures—there is a soldier;—look!—he pursues some one—it is a woman—she falls—her child, what is he doing with it? he has flung it against the rock. O God! I see the two bodies on the ground;” and she buried her head in her hands, while a cold sweat stood on her brow. “O beloved aunts, is it any of you? Some of our friends took refuge on the side of Angrogna. I may have beheld the massacre of some of your little ones.”

“O God!” exclaimed Echard, “is there a heaven above to make amends for this? Dost Thou behold the earth, or hast Thou forsaken thy people?”

“Reproach not the Lord,” interrupted Ardoine, looking up to heaven, “the cup is bitter to us when we drink it, but there

is a Father and a Judge above us. We have read of these things before in the cold pages of history, but the reality is a terrible agony."

"Can these be the deeds of a true church?" continued Echard to himself. "Did our Saviour die, as it were yesterday, for the sins of the human race? Did God so love us that He spared not his own Son? Was this blessed Son crucified to save our souls, and dare we proselytize for Him by the sword, the rack, and the assassin's dagger? My conscience abhors the idea. Church of Rome, as I look down upon this valley of slaughter, of fire and blood, I forswear thy creed; for thou art the Church, not of Christ, but of fallen human nature. I abjure thy altars, and will cast in my lot with those thou persecutest. Ardoine, I am one with you in creed; I belong to the Church of your fathers."

"Thank God for this ray of consolation, even in this sad hour," replied Ardoine.

“But what do I see there, over there, on the opposite side of the valley, in the path just skirting the forest of pines?”

Echard was unwilling to add to the pangs of his companion, and for some time returned no answer.

“Look, dear Echard, they appear to me to be like soldiers. I see the moving flashes of light. It is the sun glancing off their helmets. They are going up the path to Rora. O heavenly Father! perhaps they are a band of the Duke’s soldiers sent to destroy Rora, and many members of my family are there. Are we all to be cut off in one day?”

“Fear not,” replied Echard, “there is your uncle Janavel; and you know what a lion-hearted man he is.”

“But he has only a handful of men, and look at the number of the enemy. And if they should surprise the place.—Gracious Heaven! the deeds we read of in history as having been done in Calabria and Provence might be repeated there.”

CHAPTER V.

THE VALLEY OF LUCERNA.

Quante delizie e quante, o bel paese,
Nel tuo grembo profuse il ciel cortese!
Qui dolce clima io sento ed aria pura
Non da esali attoscata d'acque infette.
Veggio piagge smaltate di verdura;
E sovr'esse aleggiar salubri aurette;
Pure linfe spicciar dai verdi colli,
Facendo l'erbe e i campi freschi e molli;

E il Pelice fra i rivi alzando il corno,
Ir con piè torto fra i lapilli al piano;
E nutrir sulle lame a sè d'intorno
Il noce, il pioppo, il salice, l'ontano.
Veggio di vaghi fior pinte le sponde,
Ed i pesci guizzar nelle chiare onde.

Là di castagni stendersi una china,
E giù ne' campi biondeggiar la spica;
Miro colà sul tergo alla collina
Poggiar la vite al pesco e al prugno amica;

Quà spalliere di rose e di gesmini,
Siepi di crespi bossi e d' albospini.

Come bella corona le montagne
Ergono al cielo le sublimi creste,
E fan schermo alle ville e alle campagne
Dall' infuriar di venti e di tempeste,
Qui nella valle, come in loro sede
Regnan la pace, l' amistà, la fede.

Quante delizie e quante, o bel paese,
Nel tuo grembo profuse il ciel cortese !

GIOVANNI NICOLINI, LA TORRE, MAGGIO, 1863.

THE hour had come, fraught with ruin, misery, and bloodshed; but nature knew it not. The sun had risen upon Zoar, but a few moments before the storm of God's wrath turned the summer lake into the Dead Sea; and so the lavish sunshine glows on the doomed valley of Lucerna, and on the convent of La Tour, on the eve of the "Piedmontese Easter."

"It was from the steeple of a Catholic Church (St. Germain l'Auxerrois) that the signal for the massacre of St. Bartholomew was given; it was from the minsters of the Cathedral of Palermo that the Sicilian

Vespers sounded; it was from an edifice which bore the name of the Virgin Mary, that the signal was given for the bloody annihilation of the Church of the Valleys. O holy Mother of Christ! the highly-favoured Mary! if a sword was to pierce thy soul, was it not by means of that Church which pretending to honour thee most, calls thee Queen of angels, yet makes thee Queen of demons?"—*Muston*, vol. i., part ii., chap. vii.

The flag on which the episcopal hands had rested floats in the breeze. Its emblems, the cross, the sword, the olive-branch, and its appeal to the Judge of all, are displayed in the sight of heaven and earth.

The sun does not cease its shining, but its glittering rays fall upon that ensign of death, even as upon the glancing mountain dew. This is the signal. The signal! For what? For work to be done in the name of the Redeemer of the human race, who purchased bliss for man at the price of

his cross and passion. What! Are these shrieks that rend the air the accents that will be acceptable to his ear? Are these mangled bodies his offerings? Is this human blood, tinging the torrents, the sacrificial expiation with which his altars must be sprinkled? Are these men, with cowl and gown, a crucifix in one hand, a sword in the other, fury and hatred in their eyes, are these his Apostles? Are these regiments of cavalry his last-commissioned servants? Are these soldiers reeling half drunk out of the tavern, bearing various uniforms and devices, are these his band for the conversion of the helpless to his faith? Speak, ye heavens and earth! Be turned into blood thyself, O sun! if this be so. Speak, ye crags from which the old man was rudely hurled; speak, ye granite, bespattered with the brains of the infant; speak, ye mountain gorges, strewn with the fragments of human limbs; speak, ye crystal snows, dyed with the blood of the

pregnant mother; speak, ye forests, in which rotted the virgin, shot down like the wolf! O Nature, if thou hast a voice, speak! and send that voice to the throne of the Eternal!

O earth, earth, earth! One day thou shalt cry out. Thou shalt then disclose thy blood, and no more cover thy slain. The crags of Angrogna shall cry out to God, and every hidden deed of blood shall be brought to light.

The stillness of the early morning has been broken. The echo, which the child has often playfully tested, now rings with its dying wail. The screams of death and the brutal oaths of foreign soldiers are heard on the slopes where the shouts of joy sounded before. The battle cries and national shouts of French, Bavarian, Irish, and Piedmontese, mingle in the fell war whoop of the Church of Rome.

Ye rugged crags, ye are tenderer than

man, for ye are a part of nature, and nature bears a faint impress of God.

Ye thoughtless, behold Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, sweating great drops of blood for man's redemption ; behold him speechless before his tormentors, his face livid and marred ; look at him on the malefactor's cross, and hear the exclamation of his parched lips, " Father, forgive them : " again behold these martyred mountaineers, defenceless, courageous, forgiving ; sacrificing their lives before they will resign their simple faith, founded on the Word of God : once more behold the regiments of cavalry and infantry, these bands of assassins, these escaped from prison, these outlaws and bandits, deluging these homes with blood in the name of the God of Heaven and of the Pope of Rome : study the subtle, passionate monk, and the implacable, perfidious general : review these scenes of human life, and then form your own conclusions.

The hours roll on. A thin white column of smoke rises on the opposite side of the valley of Lucerna. Gradually the column thickens, and assuming a sombre shade, waxes denser and blacker. It hangs like a cloud above those trees, and stands out in its dusky, wavy outline, fringed by the bright sunshine of Easter Eve. The burning of that hamlet attests the massacre of its inhabitants. This scene is not solitary, for as the day advances the area of ecclesiastical havoc and victory becomes widened.

Look down the valley of Lucerna ; what means yon floating mist of smoke beyond La Tour, which like a funeral pall enshrouds the spot ? Look up the valley westward, towards Villar. Alas ! the spots of desolation multiply in the landscape. The hours roll on ! That fair valley is dotted from end to end, and every here and there the yellow gush of the fire leaps forth amid the trees, and the roof of the house, which peeped above as a friendly landmark, is blotted from

sight, as it sinks to the ground to add to the charred wreck. The valley of Lucerna has gradually become overcast. Those insular patches of smoke have expanded; many of those brooding clouds touch each other; at last hundreds of them join together, forming a death-like canopy, casting a dark shadow over the length and breadth of that vale, intercepting the brightness of the sun, and relieved only by the tawny streak of the consuming flame beneath.

The flag of death waved gently in the froward breeze, which lightly shook the scented petals of the violet, and the bright Italian sun poured down his shimmering light upon the scene. The gloomy pall was edged by the rays which came from above, though unlike the frail pure mist of morning it refused to be dispersed. But at length the scene changes. Clouds settle on the Alps, a driving wind comes rushing down the valley from the mountains, the sky becomes overcast, an upper

layer of banked clouds, the handiwork of Nature, rest on the valleys. Nature, that vestal intercessor, would fashion a veil to hide those deeds from heaven; she would mediate between man and God; she would intercept those astonished glances which the angels, from their starry heights, would cast on those scenes of torture, desolation, and death.

The valley smokes! The valley lately fresh with sunshine and with spring!

Nor is this the only spot in the sunny south which the charity of the Vatican has blackened with ruin. The hills of Calabria, the slopes of Leberon, the gorge of the Val Louise, the valley of Pragela, the snows of the Valteline, the Marquisate of Saluces, the plains of Languedoc and Provence, the mighty desolate tract in the Hautes Cevennes, measuring nearly forty leagues, and including 466 razed villages, are the scenes of Rome's prowess, who, in the name of faith, hope and love, can change

the garden of Eden into the blasted and smoking Sodom.

And time would fail to revert to Valladolid, Seville, Thorn, Bohemia, Nismes, the Netherlands, Ireland, with their massacres in gross and their murders in detail. And yet the Church of Rome would have us believe that she is not a persecuting Church, and we are intolerant because we decipher the bloody chronicles of the Western Ashtaroth, and protest in the name of human nature !

Reader, look at the Valley of Lucerna on April 24, 1655, and admit, either that there is no Providence, or that there is a judgment to come. But ten thousand collateral inductions convince us that the throne of the Universe is not vacant, and that there is a God ; while this last proof is a species of practical appeal to our moral sense, which makes up the complement of the arguments.

As the ashes of Gomorrah testify to a

present judgment, so let the smoke of Lucerna demonstrate that which is to come.

Widowed Church, thou art in the dust, and sackcloth is thy covering; but fear not, fill up thy martyr roll, and thou shalt hereafter be a crown of Glory in the hand of thy God!

Oh, look at Nature, fresh from the hand of God, in all her beauty and chastity. The breath of the Lord lingers upon her, and He pronounces her "very good." The new-made man walked erect, and passed by the sacramental tree in conscious innocence. His heart, like the blue wave of Galilee, in which the overhanging stars are graven, reflected his God. Leap over centuries, and contrast the ruins. If the dark places of the earth became vocal, would not the cry reach unto the heavens? Her soil is red with her children's blood. She groaneth and travaileth in pain until now. These gorges have dripped with the blood of their children, yon meadows have been enriched



THE BURNING VALLEY.

by the bodies of their cultivators, the silvery torrent has become gory ere it joins the river in the plain beneath. Look at Eden and Adam whilst the tree of knowledge of good and evil was untouched. Look at the valleys of the Alps on Easter Saturday, 1655, when Adam's children, infuriated by religion, (strange paradox!) have sunk lower than the beasts that perish.

Long did Echard and Ardoine stand upon the crag, but at length they retreated under the projecting buttress of rock, which afforded a hiding-place and commanded a view of the valley beneath. They are above the sea of clouds which gird the base of the mountain; and look downwards on the rolling mist which has hidden the Convent of La Tour and Ardoine's home of childhood. The dim echoes of ravage and murder ascend on the breeze, and pierce the dense covering which has blotted out the details of misery from their view. Let them clasp each other in the

sight of God and heaven. Let them look aloft, and let those tears be dried in the light of yon burning sun, which still shines gloriously in his trackless march, above the gloom of the clouds and smoke. Let them turn from earth to heaven. God is there, the souls of many of their late friends and relatives are there, standing before the throne of the Lamb, with palms in their hands, and songs of victory in their mouths.

Echard strained Ardoine to his breast, and wiping away her tears bade her trust in God, when he was suddenly startled, and relaxed his grasp, as the shouts "*Ammazzi*" "*Ammazzi*" were borne on the upward breeze. The report of musketry is heard on the mountain. The murderers may have tracked them. Again a shrill cry, like the piercing scream of a woman, rises from the valley, several hundred feet beneath them, and sounds like the funeral wail of one doomed to dishonour or death.

“Oh, Echard!” exclaimed Ardoine, “as you love me, help my poor country-women. It may be one of my own dear relations.”

“I should have gone, dearest Ardoine, without urging, had I not trembled for your safety. How can I leave you alone in the midst of such danger?”

“Fear not for me. God is with me. Besides, I know the place; if I see any of the soldiers, I will flee into that cavern, where you see that hole; our ancestors fled there in old days. I may find some friend there. But Echard, take care, the rock is rough and escarped; untie your scarf and loop it on to the trees, and so you can descend safely. Oh, quick; I hear the screams again. It is a woman. My ears deceive me, or I know that sound. Quick, and God will be with you and bring you safely back.”

Echard needed no further incentive, but descending rapidly, was soon hidden in the underlying sea of misty clouds.

CHAPTER VI.

A CHAPTER OF HISTORY.

“Not as a Prince, justly stirred up by the rebellious contumacy of his subjects, and provoked by their petulant and audacious behaviour, but, like a loving Father, we have chastised them more mildly than they deserved.”—*Extract from a letter of the Duke of Savoy, to his Highness the Lord Protector of England, 20th July, 1655.*

“FROM the head of the valley downwards, in villages and hamlets, on the highways and rocks, the Propaganda, by the help of the bad faith which its Church authorizes, had now introduced its soldiers, or posted its assassins. Accordingly the veil was raised. On Saturday, Easter Eve, (24th April, 1655) at four o'clock in the morning, the signal for a general massacre of the

Vaudois was given to those perfidious troops, from the summit of the castle of La Tour.

“The soldiers, apprised beforehand, had risen early; they were fresh and active; they had slept under the roofs of those whose throats they were to cut. Those whom the Vaudois had received, lodged and fed with such confidence, who ought to have protected them, were now, at the same moment throughout the whole valley, and with the same fanaticism, transformed into base assassins. Rome carries off the palm for conversions of this kind.

“And now, how can we give an idea of the horrors which ensued? It would be necessary to be able, with one glance, to include at once the whole country, to penetrate into all apartments, to be present at all executions, to distinguish, in this vast voice of anguish and desolation, each particular cry of a heart or of a living being torn in pieces. ‘Little children,’ Léger says,

‘ were torn from the arms of their mothers, dashed against the rocks, and cast carelessly away. The sick or the aged, both men and women, were either burned in their houses, or hacked in pieces ; or mutilated, half murdered, and flayed alive, they were exposed in a dying state to the heat of the sun, or to flames, or to ferocious beasts ; others were tied, in a state of nakedness, into the form of balls, the head between the legs, and in this state were rolled down the precipices. Some of them, torn and bruised by the rocks from which they had rebounded, remained suspended from some projecting rock, or the branch of some tree, and still groaned forty-eight hours afterwards. Women and young girls were violated, empaled, set up naked upon pikes at the corners of the roads, buried alive, roasted upon lances, cut in pieces by these *soldiers of the faith*, as by cannibals : then after the massacre, the children which had survived it, and were found wandering

in the woods, were carried away ; or children were forcibly taken from what remained of their afflicted family, to be conveyed into the dwellings of these butchers, and into the monasteries, like lambs taken to the slaughter-house ; and finally, the massacre and the removal of children were succeeded by conflagration, the monks, the propagandists, and the *zealous Catholics* running from house to house with resinous torches, or incendiary projectiles, and ravaging in the midst of the fires these villages now filled with corpses.'

"Such was the frightful, unparalleled, unprecedented scene which was then presented in these regions of despair. 'And let it not be said,' adds the historian Léger, 'that I exaggerate things upon account of the persecutions which I myself personally have endured ; I have travelled from one neighbourhood to another to collect the authentic testimonies of the survivors, who deponed what things they had seen before

two notaries who accompanied me. In some places fathers had seen their children torn through the midst by strength of men's arms, or cut through with swords ; in other places mothers had seen their daughters forced or murdered in their presence ; daughters had witnessed the mutilation of the living bodies of their fathers ; brothers had seen the mouths of their brothers filled with powder, to which the persecutors set fire, making the head fly in pieces ; pregnant women

* * * * *

What shall I say ? O my God ! the pen falls from my hands. Dead bodies lay scattered about or were planted upon stakes ; portions of children, torn in quarters, had been flung in the middle of the road ; brains were plastered against the rocks ; trunks of human bodies were to be seen destitute of arms and limbs, or bodies half flayed, or with the eyes torn out of the head, or the nails torn off the toes ; others were fastened to trees with the chest opened, and without

heart or lungs; here might be seen bodies of women still more horribly mutilated; there graves scarcely filled up, where the earth still seemed to give forth the groans of the unhappy victims who had been buried alive; everywhere misery, terror, desolation and death! These are the things which I can tell!

“The universal destruction of the Vaudois’ houses by fire followed the massacre of their inhabitants. ‘In many hamlets,’ the witness of the martyrs proceeds, ‘not one single cottage remained standing, so that the beautiful valley of Lucerna there presented only the aspect of a burning furnace, where cries, which became more and more unfrequent, attested that a people had lived!’

“Léger adds after this a long series of notarial depositions, giving the particulars of martyrdoms of which there had been eyewitnesses; the horrors which were committed in the face of the sun, the names of the

victims, and the vauntings of their butchers. I shall not copy the representations of these frightful scenes. Why should we stay to contemplate individual martyrdoms, when we see an entire people suffer martyrdom at once!

“All these noble and courageous persons, thus put to death, might have saved their lives by abjuring their religion; and the torments inflicted upon many of them were still prolonged in prison without making them yield. Ten years, twenty years afterwards, there were still in the galleys of the sovereign galley-slaves who were *martyrs*. In the dungeons of Villefranche and of Turin there were forgotten victims whose tortures, firmness and joyful death, Heaven alone could know.”—From Dr. Muston’s *Israel of the Alps*, vol. i. part ii. chap. vii. page 348.*

* For verifications and details, see *Morland*, Book ii. chap. vi. Léger, Part ii. chap. ix. page 108.

Both Morland and Léger published “The factum of the Court of Turin,” or the official account of the massacres, and refute the document paragraph by paragraph.

CHAPTER VII.

VILLALMIN ROCHE.

THE tragedies of Easter Eve, which had long formed the subject of grave deliberations, were now receiving their full accomplishment, through the united efforts of generals, officers, bishops, abbots, monks, soldiers, and outlaws. The Councils of the Vatican and the devices of the "*Consilium de Propagandâ Fide et extirpandis Hæreticis*" were now being wrought into human history.

Rome Papal ! shallow copyist of Rome Pagan, not merely hast thou imitated the heathens, in the ceremonies attending thy "Pontifex Maximus," in the canonization

and invocation of saints, (where Janus cedes to Peter, Lucina to Margaret, Mars to George,) in thy self-inflicted lashings, in thy purgatory, in prayers for the dead, in thy vestal virgins, candles, processions, carnivals, holy water, statues, Agnus Dei and charms, in the worship of images, and many other such-like things, but thou hast servilely copied paganism down to its bloody rites. The times have changed, but the principles and deeds have not. It is not Domitian gloating over the dying agonies of the Nazarene in the Flavian Amphitheatre; we are surrounded by an amphitheatre of hills on which the Church of Rome has loosed her Neros for the slaughter of Christians. The child cowers under the juniper bush on the slopes of the Vandalin, because it will not add *Ave Maria* to the name of Jesus, and the tender babe is dashed against the rocks because its mother bows not to a cross of wood that stands upon the roadside.

It was past midday on that same Saturday, when two or three soldiers might have been seen wandering over the spur of the Vandalin, between Castelluzzo and La Serre, as if in pursuit of some fugitives.

“Well, Berru,” said Villalmin, “we have been out some time from the Convent, and though we’ve done some of the Church’s work, yet we have not found that couple on whose heads there’s that good price. That cursed Abbot Malvicino spoiled my first sleep to send me off on this business, to catch that apostate officer, and some girl whom the Marquis wishes to convert. He said he would follow us, but I don’t see anything of him either, and this is about the place. Ah well, this mountain is a change for you after your prison, and I dare say you relish the work.”

“*Cospetto*, I do. I was in prison not long ago on the charge of murder, but thanks to the Holy Mother’s clemency, she is merciful. I have earned a full indulgence

by this time, so that the heretics after all are useful in the world."

"*Dalli, Dalli*, they have given us some sport," replied Villalmin; "I never had such a day before. I don't think this barbarous Celt has ever seen the like."

"Arrah," responded O'Flanagan, "but this is child's play to our wark, masthers. We ought to be handy in this line, for we killed seventy thousand of the Sassenachs, and made the gutters in Ould Ireland run rid with their blood. We did, as I'm the lagal King of Connaught."

"*Gnaffe*," retorted Berru, "I can't understand his jargon. My fellow prisoners will enjoy this out. They'll earn the Pope's indulgence and no mistake; but Villalmin, by the filings of Peter's chain, which the Pope blessed and which once cured my colic, tell me what you've been doing to-day."

"Oh, it would want one of our poets to write what I've done. I met one old wo-

man in the valley by the fountain near La Tour, I cut off her ears and her nose, and told her to say *Ave Maria*; the obstinate wretch would'nt do it, so I cut off a finger at each refusal, and then I left her for some other of our mates to finish."

"Well, good luck comes by cuffing. Go on with your diary. What next?"

"In the next place, I had this morning an opportunity which I've long wanted of trying my arquebus. It's a new one from Turin, and carries a large ball. I saw a little girl leading a boy, and I let them get some clear seventy yards, and then I thought I would see what my piece was worth, so I aimed at the girl. By the Holy Father's toe, the ball went through her head as if she had been made of touch-wood. Then the little fellow began screaming and crying out for his grandfather Rodolphe, and for his sister Ardoine and Raynald, and a lot of names; so I told him how sorry I was some one had killed his sister,

and that I would take him home. He told me his name was Valère, and that he belonged to that family of sixes. You heard speak of them I dare say—six sisters spliced to six brothers. Were not you there in January before your last murder? Well, he said he was one of them, and I asked him whether he would like to go home; so I told him to lie down, and, as I had not much time, I cut off his head at four blows, and left it hanging on a tree for any of his friends to fix on again.”

“*Cospetto!* what is that I see on your hat, Villalmin? It looks curious.”

“It’s an emblem or two I stuck on after the manner of some of our forefathers that I’ve heard tell of, some of the little fellow’s fingers by way of ornament. But talking of the family of sixes; Pancalier stumbled on a nest of the same lot this morning. There were some of them in the house where he slept, and he killed some five or six of them; two young men, three

young women, and some of the younger fry."

"I don't think," rejoined Berru, "that they will ever meet, and make up six times six in the old place again."

"No; but they've met, I reckon, on the other side; heretics like them I suppose don't stop at purgatory, but go down to hell at once."

"That's too good for them, as I've heard Father Rorengo say. They broke the purity of the Catholic Church, and would keep quoting their texts instead of leaving it to the priest."

"At least they've been of some use here, comrade; they have given us a pleasant day's shooting, and varied the dull routine of barrack life. It's not all places in Europe where one could get the sport we've had. Look, comrade, what have we there? There's an old fellow something like a regular *barbet*, and there's a woman near him, all dressed in black. Halloa! I think they see us—have you got your gun ready?"

“Nay, you’re wrong; there are two women, and there’s no *barbet*.”

“*Dalli*, I swear I’m right; I see two women and some children, but there was a *barbet*. They’ve separated—he’s gone to the left. He’s climbing up the hill there, just reaching the patch of snow. *Accidente*, lend me your gun. Confound it—he’s ducked. The ball just went over his head—again missed him. Quick, or he’ll have gained the summit, and will give me the slip.”

“There, I’ll follow him up,” exclaimed Berru, running after Léger. “If I could bag him it would be a triumph, and I should like a purse made of the skin of a *barbet*. Villalmin, you take the women and follow them, you’ll find some one to help you—there’s this Irishman.”

“All right, I’ll look after the woman in black; I’ll settle her, and some of those who are with her, or my name is not Villalmin Roche. I have done my share to-day,

and no one shall say they've done more for the Church than I have. My indulgence has been well earned. Stay, I can run better without my arquebus, which catches in the branches. Lie there, weapon, and I'll soon send the balls that are in you into some one's brain."

Echard, in his descent, perceived the movement, and waiting until the man had passed, hastened to the spot and seized the piece. There was a large projecting piece of rock behind which he stood. The voices of the pursued and pursuers again became audible, as if they were approaching the same place. The fugitive must have doubled on her assailants. Doubtful what to do, he trembled in the interval as he thought of his beloved Ardoine, for the cruel word *Ammazzi* again sounded shrilly in his ear, as when he was standing upon the crag above. But he was not left long in suspense. A woman with streaming hair and dressed in mourning hurried along.

He recognized her as the one he had liberated from the convent of La Tour some few days before. At all hazards he would rescue her a second time.

“Soldiers,” shouted Echard, who had recognized Villalmin and his companion, “halt! your officer commands you; forbear to hurt that woman, she is my spoil—Villalmin—halt!”

Echard hoped that the sound of his name would arrest the soldier, and that the sight of the uniform of Savoy would extort obedience from one who was probably ignorant of the peculiar position in which he was placed himself.

The pursuers were, however, too intent upon their victim to heed the command, even if they had heard it. The fugitive screamed with terror, and Echard feared he was too late to save her life; availing herself, however, of a bend in the rock, she doubled on her pursuers and retraced her steps, by which manœuvre

she approached the place where Echard stood.

“Merciful Sir !” exclaimed the fugitive, “save us ! you are an officer. If you have any honour, have pity on me. Save me from these outlaws.”

“Calm yourself, calm yourself, my good woman,” replied Echard. “Quick ! creep behind that rock and do not speak.”

The voices of the pursuers drew nearer and nearer.

“*Ammazzi, Ammazzi, Ammazzi*, where on earth has the she-barbet got to ? She was here a minute ago, but I don’t see her now. She faced about and came this road. I only hope we can get her. We must make up for having killed that last hag too soon. Fine sport this sort of hunting.”

“Yes, g-l-o-r-i-o-u-s ; but draw up, man wind a little, for I’m blown.”

“Nay, nay, I’ll wind none, till I have clasped my dame. If we don’t keep well up to her she’ll beat us among these trees.

Oh! I see her behind that large stone. Make ready, old girl, for I'll catch you, and divorce my ——."

The remaining part of the sentence dwelt in the mind of the speaker, but found no utterance from his lips. A shot from behind the stone pierced his brain, and he fell down in the middle of the path, causing his companion to trip over him in his onward course. The second was about to rise and renew his pursuit, when a young man sprang forth from behind the stone, and dealt him such a blow with the end of the musket as caused him to lie insensible by the side of his dead companion.

Thus perished, by his own weapon, Villalmin Roche, one of the most conspicuous murderers in the celebration of the "Piedmontese Easter."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HOLY RELICS.

ECHARD hastened to reassure the unfortunate Martha, whom he had recognized as one of the six sisters and a relative of Ardoine, and he anticipated with pleasure the utterance of Ardoine's gratitude for this life preserved. Martha was however too exhausted to proceed, and as the voices on the hill side had died away, Echard returned for a moment to search the soldiers, to recover any plunder which might belong to the sufferers, and to arm himself with their weapons in his own defence. On looking at the countenance of the man who lay stunned upon the ground, he remembered that he was the soldier whom he had seen

in January, and who had conducted him to Marie's chamber.

“Wretched man,” muttered Echard to himself, “his heart must have changed under these scenes of blood, and yet there is a good expression on his face. The proverb about companions is true; at any rate he has got a severe punishment, and for the sake of what he did before I'll not deal hardly with him; but no doubt I shall find something on this murderous Piedmontese.” Lifting up Villalmin's stiffened body he placed it on the ground with the face upwards. A gleam of sunshine flitted over the dead man's countenance, and glistened on his military trappings; his eyes were glazed in death, and the expression of furious passion which had been surging in his soul at the fatal instant was stamped upon the motionless features. Proceeding to search him, Echard drew forth a packet sealed in a careful manner as if to bespeak its impor-

tance, several pieces of parchment printed with large red characters, and a few trinkets, together with a silver clasp, the property of some murdered peasants. Unrolling a parchment he read as follows :—

“Patientia Dei + Filii: Virtus, Spiritus + Sancti per intercessionem Sanctissimæ Virginis Dei Matris + Sancti Francisci, et Beatorum Didaci, et Salvatoris, liberet te Dominus ab omni febre, peste, et improvisâ morte. Amen.” On another were the more mysterious words :—“Facite homines discumbere ex Cathedrâ, Cassal 1648.”

Breaking open the sealed packet Echard found nothing but some white powder, the meaning of which he could not understand until he deciphered on the paper the almost illegible words—“*Il latte della Madonna.*” Continuing his search in the pockets of the dead man, he found three or four pieces of bones wrapped in paper, on which were various inscriptions. On one was written,

“*Sancti Justini, Virg. Martyr,*” on another “*Sancti Anthonii Abbatis,*” while a third relic was entitled “*Del Santo Sepulchro.*” Round the neck of the corpse was a chain, attached to which was a small image of the Virgin. Searching the other man, Echard found a bone bearing the inscription, “*Sancti Lucii Eremitæ,*” the same white powder in a separate packet, a leaden image of the Virgin with two or three crosses round his neck, and a paper with the sentence printed in large red characters, “*Pro conversione Hæreticorum.*”

“Alas!” said Echard to himself, “do not these relics savour more of magic than of Christianity? Are these the pretended amulets with which you have been furnished by your priests, to encourage you in the work of blood and rapine, and to protect you against these heretical bullets? God of Heaven, such deeds cannot be acceptable to Thee! The confessions of hearts wrung with agony on the rack might suit

Moloch, but cannot please a God of love! and such trivial puerilities as these charms must be ludicrous to a man who dares to reason."

"Wretched Villalmin, thy red letters have not saved thee from '*Morte improvisâ*' in the most awful form and with thine own bullet. Thy body is cold and stark, and thy relics are reddened by thine own blood. I must parley with conscience no longer," continued Echard, as he gathered up the spoils, and placed them in his doublet. "The words I have heard from Ardoine have deepened my convictions. Love of her may have disposed me to listen more readily, but God forbid that I should sacrifice my creed to the mere impulse of the heart. And yet, my beloved Ardoine, truth has a holy emphasis from thy lips, and I could sit unmoved, amid the death-rage of battle, to listen to thy voice: thou hast helped me onward, and I bless thee; I feel an instinctive yearning which I cannot define, not merely to thee, but to thy

father's faith. Before I knew thee my spirit was hollow. I despised my creed after what I had seen at Rome; I was lapsing into dreary unbelief; but thou hast cast the substance of truth before my soul. Oh that kind Heaven may let me sit at thy feet to hear thy counsels; but if an uncertain fate divides us, my heart will never be a traitor to these holy memories, and our spirits shall meet in that bright land above, where is the original type and model of thy form, and face, and mind." Approaching the other soldier, Echard perceived in him signs of returning animation, and taking out of the man's doublet a flask of wine, he poured some into his mouth.

"Holy Patrick, has a Sassenach got hold of me? Arrah, to be shure an' we did. Where am I? I'm kilt—at last. Ah! Michael O'Flanagan, you're dead. Och, and is this myself at all? no, it's my sperrit calling to my body—I've forgot my tailoring, to which I was once put printice in

the city of Cark, that loyal city. Ah God and the blissed Mother, and the thrue Church for iver! Poor body, I see you lying there,—you don't look so handsome as I always thought you, but I often guessed they changed me in the cradhle. Arrah, and whose this doing me riverince? Och! when my poor mother held me in her finger and thumb, and clasping me to her breast dipped me into the Shannon. I'm kilt, and I fear I'm dead. Oh where's my holy bone? that our Holy Father, God bliss him, blissed. Grind the bones, they've not kept me from this rap on my skull. Ye rotten bone, I would'nt take ye to a pawnshop in Enniskillin. O my mother, have I got the packet of your milk? I'm clane into the bog, but I'm an Irishman, and the last mimber of the Kings of Connaught, as long as grass runs or water grows."

With these words Michael O'Flanagan relapsed into his previous state of unconsciousness.

CHAPTER IX.

MARTHA.

ECHARD's search did not occupy him many minutes, and he hastily ran back to Martha, in eager impatience to rejoin Ardoine.

“O my beloved !” said Echard to himself, “my heart reproaches me for having left thee a moment, but thou didst send me, and I am rewarded in having saved one who is dear to thee.”

“Oh save me, save me, sir,” exclaimed Martha, in a paroxysm of terror, as Echard approached ; “let my life and honour be safe in your keeping.”

“Fear not, madam ! but you remember

me not ; methinks I have seen you before under circumstances not to be forgotten."

"Oh where, sir ? Ah, now I remember ! I have been so terrified. I am beholding my deliverer, who released me from the dungeon in the convent at La Tour. Forgive me, that in my fears and sorrows I did not recognize one to whom I owe so much."

"Ah ! madam, I too have endured much, but lean upon my arm ; we will mount this hill, and rejoin a friend. I will conduct you to a place of safety. You may well tremble when you behold this uniform on me ; yet my creed is changed, and I am in heart one of yourselves."

"Thank God if this be so ! I prayed for you earnestly, that it might please Him to lead you into His truth."

"I think I can give you some more information to cheer your heart. On yonder crag stands one who I presume is your niece. Her name is Ardoine. I rescued her last night from the convent

of La Tour, and we have this morning fled to the mountains.”

“ O my beloved Ardoine ! You do indeed, sir, cheer a wretched woman’s heart, so far as it can be cheered ; for more than twenty long years have I sorrowed, and the smile of hope has never crossed my lips. You see this garb of mourning on me ; it is the emblem of my heart.”

“ What has been the cause of such deep anguish ?” inquired Echard, as he assisted his companion up the steep slope.

“ Ah sir ! none can explain their griefs ; what is hot within the sufferer’s breast falls coldly on the ear of the listener.”

“ Nay, tell me its source ; you will find comfort in knowing that another heart offers you sympathy.”

“ Oh ! you only embitter my woe,” exclaimed Martha, wringing her hands, and gazing fixedly on his open countenance. A look passed over his features which recalled her husband, and awoke the memories of the

past : and though she beheld that hated uniform which brought to her remembrance the woes under which her people had suffered, she nevertheless regarded Echard with the intensity of a sudden interest.

“Speak to me, good lady,” added Echard, in a soothing tone, “but let us join Ardoine who waits for us on the crag. How delighted she will be to see you ! There do not be afraid to lean on my arm ! plant your foot firmly on the loose stones, and throw your whole weight on me.”

“I have had,” she continued, after a pause, “sorrows enough in this present year, to turn black hair like yours into these grey locks. But it is more than twenty years since my sorrow first began. My hair was black, and yet in one sleepless night it turned to this very colour which you now behold.”

“Oh let me weep with you, for nothing so well becomes the young as sympathy with the old.”

“I thank Thee, O my God!” exclaimed Martha, “who hast provided me a helper in this wilderness. Alas! my grief brings down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. You know not what is a mother’s heart.”

“True, and in one sense I may be said hardly to know what is a son’s heart, for Nature never taught me to lavish the choicest inner gifts of my soul on her who reared me.”

“A mother’s heart is a mystery. There is no reasoning with it. It loves, it yearns, it abides. It is Nature’s truest, fondest instinct. A wound here is often one for which there is no cure.”

“Yes, I believe that, for a mother is Nature’s friend whom death alone removes. Would that I had known the exquisite gift!”

“Sir, I am a mother, and as such I mourn in the bitterness of my soul. Yes, it is the voice of Nature, for what the

mother is that the mother was, and has been from the beginning. Ah ! you know it not," continued she with more warmth ; "for none except a woman and a mother can know its innate yearnings. Look how the cry of the child, which falls coldly on the father's ear, causes the mother's heart to throb."

Martha trembled as she spoke these words as if her soul was stirred to its depths.

"Oh tell me, madam ! the cause of your sorrow. Know, moreover, that I may claim a right to soothe you, for I love Ardoine, and that will make me one with you."

"And does Ardoine love you ?—Alas ! poor Raynald, my boy, thou too then wilt know what sorrow and disappointment are."

Echard paused abruptly ; the arrow had gone to his heart, and filled it with tumultuous and painful emotions. Raynald must be Ardoine's cousin, whom she had known from childhood. Doubtless he loved Ar-

doine, and that had given him that fierce jealousy in that encounter in his aunt's chamber. Echard's heart writhed with agony lest his hopes might be quenched, when they were dawning more brightly than before.

"Does that young man love Ardoine?" asked Echard, in a faltering voice. "Are they not as brother and sister?"

"No, they are cousins. He has loved her from his childhood. They have played together and grown up together, and his whole soul has been absorbed in her."

"But she does not love him!"

"I cannot answer that. She has known him all her life long, and it is hard to say in such cases where the love of the brother ends and the more absorbing one begins."

"I have not, it is true, known her all my life, but in the short time I have known her, twice has my arm shielded her from death or ruin."

“God bless you for your kindness! Though you seem, in some mysterious manner, to be a bearer of both good and evil fortune to our circle.”

“But you have not told me the cause of your grief. Oh! where is Ardoine?” exclaimed Echard, as at this moment he reached the crag and did not see his late companion. “I left her here, she said she would wait for my return. God grant that she has not been carried off; I did not hear her scream. How can I find her? will you remain here while I look for her, and then I will bring her to rejoin you. Perhaps she has been frightened and has gone to find me, and we have missed each other on the hill, among the trees and rocks. I will run down again and overtake her; in the mean time be careful and watch. Some of your family are, I believe, at Rora, in case you cannot find any of them upon the side of Angrogna.”

CHAPTER X.

THE RECAPTURE.

“By John XXII. and his beatific vision, which his Bishops condemned,” groaned Malvicino, as he toiled up the spurs of the Vandalin in company with some of the Marquis’s soldiers, “it’s heavy work, Ribaud, especially when the Marquis made me rouse you so early. You have better sight than I have, as my cornea is getting flattened. Can you see anything of our fugitives? By Pope Benedict XII., who condemned the beatific vision of his predecessor John XXII., the Marquis bade me use my best endeavours to find them, and I have no doubt he’ll reward you

handsomely if you find them, and give all our fellows something also. I know he swore that he would give the Virgin a necklace of pearls."

"Well, as regards his doing it handsomely, that's a matter of opinion. How much do you think he'll really pay, if I break my shins to catch them?"

"By Pope Gregory and his barefooted Emperor, he'll not stand for money. I promise you a hundred pistoles for each of them, if you can catch them and bring them alive to him. You know that will be a great fortune for you, and enable you to give a dowry to your eldest daughter, who's been so long waiting for matrimony."

"Well yes, I should like to see Cattarina settled, and the barber's son seems a good match, if he were not such a fop. But, holy Father, refresh my memory: there are two, I think, a young man and a girl."

"There are; a young girl with golden hair, and with something white as if she

were going to be married, and a young fellow that was thought to be the Marquis's son ; he has on the uniform of an officer."

"It's strange, how is it that he's in disgrace ? I know whom you mean ; he's a fine young officer, and would often give me civil words when the others only swore at me."

"Ah well; the devil has got hold of him. He's seen too much of these heretics, and it would appear that he disputed with the Marquis on religion, and that he let out this girl whom the Church was going to convert. He got a sight of her good looks, and then he forgot all the benefits the Church has done him and all those of the Marquis, and I suppose has gone off with this she-heretic."

"That's an awful charge. I honour our holy Virgin, and would do anything for her glory. The last time when I was in battle I had a feeling that I should be killed, and just as I was priming my

musket, and had said good-bye to my wife in my heart, I lifted up my eyes, and saw before me a beautiful Virgin in white, and she said to me, 'Fear not, Ribaud, I am with you ; no ball shall hurt you ;' and sure enough, directly afterwards, one went right through my hat, but did me no harm ; and since this, I never go to Turin but I always take my offering to that picture of the Madonna, which winks every new moon."

"It was the Virgin you saw," replied Malvicino. "Happy man ! you make even an old and holy monk like me jealous. It has been your zeal for the Church that has brought you this honour ; you must not slacken in your labours, but do what you can to catch these fellows and to kill as many others as you can. Look ! we get a glimpse of the valley through the break in the trees ; it looks rather black and smoky, as if our fellows had been doing their work, and I don't see so many farms standing

about. I suppose those that are left will be given to you soldiers of the cross."

"I heard say that most of them were given to these fellows they call Irish: it's a shame to give them to foreigners, but they fight so for the Church, and think no more of blood than water. They're always quarrelling among themselves, and seem to have no appetite for their breakfast unless they've had a fight before."

"Well, each nation has its own marks; they are good Catholics. By Pope Gregory XIII. and his new calendar, I should like to be at the head of a brigade of such, in that cursed isle of England. But gently, Ribaud, this hill is steep; let your spiritual Father rest on this stone, or else he will not be able to send you into Paradise with absolution, if you make him broken-winded."

"Hark, what do I hear? It is a shot. By the company of Popes' sons there are voices. They seem familiar to me. There,

be silent, and let us creep up. Order the men behind to be careful, for there's spoil before us and our booty may be near."

"Hold!" added the Abbot, as he stretched out his short thick neck and peered among the trees. "By Clement VII., who took refuge in St. Angelo, what do I see? Softly, Ribaud, the very man I'm seeking. It must be he. I see a something through the trees like a uniform. How am I to get him? Stay, I'll call him, and you hide yourself and be ready to spring out when you hear me cry Clement, Clement, and then make him fast, and I'll consider what to do with him when we have taken him prisoner; the Marquis will allow me to treat heretics according to my own judgment."

"Friend," cried Malvicino, addressing Echard, "I have been looking for you. Oh, help me! I have fled from the convent. I am in danger. I have risked all for your sake. Will you not come hither and help me? You have run away so fast that you

never stayed to thank me for the good turn I did you last night."

"Traitor," exclaimed Echard; "you are a double-dealing knave, with all your Popes on your lips. Your plot at the convent was a selfish one for your own purposes, but it miscarried; I feel inclined to unfrock you, and make an involuntary flagellant of you. Look at the marks of destruction on all sides in the name of your Church, which converts by the sword."

"Clement, Clement," cried Malvicino, and immediately Ribaud, and several of his comrades who had come up, rushed out from behind the rocks, and speedily secured Echard.

"Soldiers, soldiers," said Malvicino, "halt! hurt not the hair of this young man's head; know that he is the son of the Marquis of Pianesse. Fear not," continued he, in a lower voice addressing Echard; "I will see that they do not harm you; but how is it that you are alone? you

did not, methinks, go away alone from the convent, and I am surprised to find you so soon parted. Where is your friend? Tell me, and I will save her from the soldiers. If you will not confide in me you will be separated from her, for she will fall in with some of the lawless Irish and perish on the mountain. You had better speak, for you are at my mercy, and I can make my peace with Pianesse by your capture."

Echard was silent, for he would have preferred death to confiding the safety of Ardoine to the Abbot of Pignerol.

"They cannot be far off," continued Malvicino to himself. "They left together, and it's not likely two young hearts would part so easily, and less so if danger was at hand. She must be close by somewhere. I must see that she does not fall into the hands of these soldiers, to be subjected to their rough usage—at all hazards she must be rescued."

"By Alexander II. that Papal Sultan,"

exclaimed the monk aloud. "Soldiers, search for a young girl who is hidden hereabouts. She belongs to the Marquis of Pianesse; but let none of you lay a finger on her, or not only will you have to answer for it to your commander, but I will refuse you absolution when dying."

"But, Holy Father, what are we to do with our prisoner?"

"Bring him along with you. Is he well tied up? there, lift him up two of you, and after the manner of Gregory shoulder him, and bear him to yonder point."

"By Pope Benedict, who was willing to sacrifice the tiara because he loved a damsel, I thought I saw the flutter of female garments through that brushwood. Yes, it moves again. It is a woman. It must be she? Oh, how can I now secure my prize, and bear her away safely? The plan is full of difficulty. But I will try to capture her in the name of all the Popes."

CHAPTER XI.

CASTELLUZZO.

MONTÉ Vandalin is flanked towards the valley of Lucerna by numerous giant spurs separated by deep ravines. One of these central offshoots, from its peculiar and castellated prominence, has received the name of Castelluzzo. A black spot in its escarped side is visible from the valley beneath, and stands forth in greater relief when the morning sun glitters from the micaceous and precipitous rocks by which it is surrounded. This is the cavern of Castelluzzo, a retreat which Nature herself provided for the persecuted children of the valleys. The only means

of access to it is by a small tunnel-like hole from the top, in whose sides notches have been cut for the feet, but whose narrow winding will permit only one person to descend at a time. From this peculiarity the cavern is almost impregnable, for the solitary assailant descending backwards is completely at the mercy of those who stand below, so that an army might perish in detail, slain by a handful. The interior of the cavern consisted of a large vaulted chamber partially excavated by the hand of man, and spacious enough to contain three or four hundred persons : a fountain feebly trickled in the centre, enough, however, to meet the necessity of any fugitives ; while near it was a rude contrivance for baking bread, hollowed out of the living rock. In one of the irregular recesses, a remarkable chink was discernible through the mountain's side. The rock itself was several yards in thickness, but in some pre-historic convulsion it had

been gently riven by the delicate yet capricious hand of Nature herself. The fissure, though so small as to defy the insertion of a knife, nevertheless was traversed by the light, and at midday a thin film of streaky sunshine hovered for a few moments upon the damp dark ground. It was a wondrous emblem of Nature's gentleness in the midst of majesty. How simple yet how grand are the works of Nature! She waters with the dew of heaven the tiny capsule overspreading the crashing fragment torn from the Alps, which in its onward course would once have levelled cities and dashed in pieces armies.

The mouth of the cavern abutted on to a narrow ledge of rock which overhung the sheer and inaccessible precipice. A few shrubs and plants, to wit the venturesome fir and birch, maintained themselves on this inhospitable strip, and shot into mid air. This narrow gallery was protected in

front and on the right side from all assailants, but to the left it was open to the attack of musketry from the upper cliff, which projected sufficiently forward to command the outlet.

This gloomy vault was precious in the sight of heaven, for the prayers of saints had arisen from out of the heart of the earth, and the songs of Zion had floated along that rough-hewn vault mingled with the murmur of the trickling stream or the howl of the rude winds, as they surged against that ragged bluff. Its stony sides bore traces of the exile's hand, as he carved thereon memorials of his faith dearer to him than the records of his forsaken home.

O ye caverns! ye have your solemn contributions to the history of the human race, but they are for the most part those of gloom, of terror, of persecution, and of death. Speak, thou cave of Mys in Provence, in which, by order of the Papal officers twenty-five Vaudois mothers were

stified, and whose dry bones lingered there for five years afterwards, as an appeal to the vengeance of heaven, and at last extorted even man's judicial investigation.

In the Val Louise in Dauphiny, in the steep slopes of Mount Pelvoux, the Visol of the Briançonnais, is an immense cavern called, "Aigue Fraide," because of its copious springs of water fed by the snow. Here La Palud heaped up the fire, and in the vaults of that cavern were found four hundred children smothered, as well as three thousand Vaudois, or the whole of the population of the Val Louise, who perished upon this occasion.

Ye caverns of the Alps, ye have gloomy memorials for the day of judgment, wherewith to brand that apostate Church which history too truly proves to be "drunk with the blood of the saints"!

"Oh, grandfather!" exclaimed a little child, in the inner part of the cavern of Castelluzzo, "I am so tired and cold and

hungry, what can you give me to eat? I am tired of this water and our mouldy bread. Where have they all gone to, and when is Raynald coming back to help us?"

"My little Lena," replied Rodolphe, "I would do what I can to help you, but I am old and weak. Come and lie near me and put your hand in my breast; there, that will keep you warm. Before you sleep, pray to God to bless all our dear friends. But here is Bertin coming to us."

"Grandfather, what can I do for you?" asked Marguerite's orphan, as he knelt beside his grandfather. "I do not know what will happen to us."

"My boy," faintly whispered the patriarch, "lift me up a little and fetch me a drop of water from the fountain; now move me near that chink, so that the ray of light may rest upon me again. I shall not live long—let the sunlight of the outer world shine once more upon my grey hair, and remind me to the last of the goodness

of God and of my Saviour's presence. Thank you, my boy; that streak of light is a voice of comfort; it reminds me that the Lord God is a sun, and that He will never forsake them that trust in Him. Now kneel down by me, and say the prayer you learned, for your father and mother, and all of our dear friends. My little Lena, Bertin is going to pray, can you clasp your hands?"

"O grandfather, I am so weak I cannot move; I am lying so near you, I cannot kneel but I will clasp my hands, and I will say Amen, as you used to teach me."

The youth bowed his head beside his grandfather, and sought protection and help from God.

"Oh, grandfather," added he, after a pause, "I can hardly realize this change. Our dear home, where a few months ago we were so happy and kind and loved each other, is all in ruins. I see you in your chair, with dear Ardoine near you, and I remember on last New Year's day how

we all came round you for your blessing : as I stand on the ledge outside I can just see the spot where La Baudène is, and there is nobody there, unless it be cruel strangers. Oh ! is the Bible true, grandfather ? If God were good would He let us suffer all these things, for I am sure that you tried to please Him ?”

“God knows what is best, my boy, and He will not lay upon us more than we can bear ; it is to try our faith and patience, and you remember my speaking on what Paul says, that ‘the affliction of this present time is not worthy to be compared with the glory which is to be revealed.’”

“Oh father ! things must be very bright and good above to make up for this world. I am sure they are very bad and sorrowful here, at least I feel them to be so.”

“God will do for us more than we can think : when you have been one hour in heaven, Bertin, you will forget all the troubles of this life, and think nothing of

them all then. Be faithful to the last, and Christ will make amends for all."

"I believe you, dear grandfather; would that I could be more like you! The Lord Jesus Christ is my hope, and I do believe in your favourite text, 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.'"

"Can you trust wholly in Him, if you were to die now?" asked Rodolphe feelingly.

"I can; I am a wretched sinner I know, but since I was confirmed I have prayed much for God's Holy Spirit, and sought to curb my temper and to avoid all ill-natured speeches, to get up early in the morning, and to be more smiling and kind. I have tried to please God, but I don't trust to this, but only to the finished work of Christ on the cross, of which you used to preach so well."

"Well, my boy, go get a mouthful of air, it will refresh you, and then if no one comes to us, you can go up through the

tunnel and see if you can procure us some more food."

"Oh! grandfather, look; in this dark corner I have found a loaf which we had forgotten, and could not see in the gloom. I will soak some of it in water, and give some to little Lena; you shall both eat some, and it will revive you. Shall I go out on the top now, or wait till it gets darker?"

"Wait, my boy, Raynald will return, if he can. I think some of them are at Rora, but I fear that some misfortune must have happened to them, if none of them come back to us."

"Don't you think," asked Bertin, "that we must wish evil to those who have done us so much harm?"

"God has told us to love our enemies, and to do good to them that hate us. You must not try to hurt them, but do as Jesus did when He was before Pilate."

"It's very hard, grandfather, but still you know best, and I wish to do what God

would have me do.—Look! there is a little gleam of sunshine, how beautiful it is! and now I can just see your beautiful white hair; it looks so nice, as Aline used to say when she played with it and curled it round her fingers. I will creep out on to the ledge for a mouthful of air. There is that birch which grows on the rock; I take hold of that and look over, and see such a long way below me. The stones I fling down fall such a long time without striking anything, and then I can trace them far away among some sheep and goats, which are feeding near the farm of Bonnets.”

Bertin then went out on the ledge and drank in the fresh air with the delight of youth, forgetting for the moment his sorrows and dangers. He plucked two or three of the mountain flowers that grew on the sides of the rock above, and tearing them into bits scattered them smilingly about the place. Then recollecting himself,

he gathered three or four of the best he could find, and gleefully took them to Rodolphe.

“Here, grandfather, here is something for you to smell ; it will remind you of dear Ardoine, who used to be so fond of getting you flowers.”

“Ah ! dear child,” said the old man, as a tear trickled down his cheeks ; “O God ! at least hear this one prayer, and shield my child from harm. She is an orphan, protect her, I beseech thee.”

Bertin then went back, and, inserting his fingers into the clefts of the lime-stone, pulled off several fragments. Selecting one from among the number which, from its size and weight, seemed suitable for his purpose, he clasped it in his right hand, and crept on to the mountain birch. He threw his arms carefully round its trunk, and steadied himself while he looked round and then below, settling in his mind the spot on which he wished the missile to alight.

At this moment a soldier appeared upon the cliff which commanded the ledge, and looking down observed the boy. A gleam of joy shot over his face, and smiling grimly, he exclaimed—

“Holy Virgin! I’ll win a crown in heaven to-day, and get my sins washed out.”

He raised his musket and took deliberate aim.

Bertin, unconscious of danger, had not yet composed himself to his satisfaction, and after moving his feet backwards a little on the ledge, once more leaned his body forward on the projecting birch.

The soldier’s sight was disarranged. He had taken a straight aim at his victim’s heart, but now changing his intentions he levelled his piece at the boy’s head. The awful moment has come which may send a human being into eternity. The boy smiles as he sees a flock of birds far below him, and wonders if he can hit them. The trigger clicks, the flint flashes—there

is a report. The echoes of Castelluzzo take up the sound, and ring it out again, from crag to crag, from glade to glade; the report peals throughout the cavern, and its sullen notes reverberate among the farthest windings. The boy still clasps the tree; but the stone in his hand has become unclasped, and falls downwards. Bertin himself, struck through the brain, retains his position; he has passed as it were unconsciously from earth to heaven; the blood-gouts of that young life drip fast and silently over the sullen gorge, and staining the broken stones hundreds of feet beneath, attest that he is a corpse.

“Bertin,” said Rodolphe, after the expiration of some time, “where are you? What is the boy about? He cannot have forgotten his grandfather. I hope no accident has happened to him. Alas, O merciful Father! what did that noise mean? I heard the report of a gun; can the poor lad have been shot? But that is

unlikely; perhaps his venturing spirit has led him up the tunnel to find some food, and I have not noticed him; or can he have overbalanced himself and fallen from the ledge? Come, my little one," said the old man fondly to Lena, who pressed closely to him, "are you warm? What can your old grandfather do for you, my child, my child?" Lena was, however, unconscious of his voice, for her feeble nature was unable to sustain such continued privations and want of food. The agonizing thought flashed through Rodolphe's mind that she did not breathe. He was as it were loath to move her, for her little hands were partially clasped, and she convulsively clung to his arm. Disengaging her with considerable difficulty, owing to his feebleness, though he had been somewhat revived by his late food, he moved the child so that the film of sunlight could shine upon her face. It fell upon a vacant and a lustreless eye; the

spirit of the child had fled to her Saviour. The old man was left alone.

Then did the past rush upon his mind, with harrowing vividness; the patriarchal scenes, in which he was an actor, the tones of his daughters, the peculiar kindnesses of each, the loveliness of Ardoine, the endearing prattle of the numerous little ones, the cruel deaths which had carried some of them off; these thoughts wrung his soul; his heart was vexed within him, and at the last he spake, though feebly, as with the voice of a dying man.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAMENTATION.

“How doth the Church mourn whose dwelling is in the rocks, and whose foundations were upon the cliffs, where the eagle maketh his nest! How hath she put on sackcloth and ashes, and cast dust upon her head! She weepeth sore in the night, her tears are on her cheeks; her blood hath been shed by strangers, and hath stained the skirts of her clothing. How hath the Lord covered us with a cloud in the day of His anger! He hath thrown down our strongholds, and polluted the sanctuary where his name hath long dwelt. A flaming fire devoureth us, thorns are set in our eyes,

our teeth are broken by them that have us in derision. The heathen have come into our inheritance, our holy temple have they defiled, and made the homes of our fathers heaps of ashes. O Lord ! the dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of heaven, and the flesh of thy saints to the beasts of the earth. Their blood have they shed like water, and there was none to bury us. We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. The sighs of the prisoner, the lamentation of the widow, the groanings of the fatherless, ascend to heaven, from these valleys where the Most High received the incense of prayer and praise. Our elders sit upon the ground, and keep silence, our mothers quake for their firstborn, our virgins hang down their heads to the ground, our little ones are dashed against the stones ; we are become as Sodom, yea, we are unto the Lord even as Gomorrah.

Our young and old lie upon our mountains, our virgins have fallen by the sword, they are slain, they are dead, their remembrance is cut off. Alas! how is our gold become dross, and our silver even as the mire of the streets! The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth, the young children ask bread, but no mother breaketh it for them. Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens. We are orphans, and fatherless; our mothers are widows. Yet the Lord is in His holy temple. His eyes behold the things that are done in the earth, and He hath appointed a day in which He will make inquisition for blood. Withdraw thy hand from thy bosom, O Lord! let thine arm be bared; arise and help us for Thy name's sake. It is of His mercies that we are not consumed; for the Lord is good, the Lord is a God of right, just and true are all His ways. We have sinned, but Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel!"

Rodolphe ceased. A sound was heard as if some one was descending by the tunnel into the cavern. By their noise and oaths he knew they were the soldiers of Pianesse, intent upon the destruction of heretics by fire or sword. His spirit ebbed, and he felt as if his life were sinking. But he raised his thoughts to that God to whom darkness and light are both alike, and whose eye searcheth through the heart of the earth as on the plains of heaven.

“Father of mercies!” he gasped, “the time has come at last, my soul must stand before Thee. I approach Thee in the name of Christ, whose gospel for forty years I have striven to preach in these my father’s valleys, and now I die in them alone! an outcast! in the heart of the rock, where fourscore years ago my boyish footsteps roved for the spring flower; but I murmur not: the passage to Thy presence is speedy; and when there, the

blackest past is like a dream when one awaketh. Lay not these sins to the charge of these deluded men ; we have suffered, but God forbid that we should console ourselves with the thoughts of their misery ! Protect those of my family who yet live, and quench not the light of our Church, nor remove our candlestick utterly out of its place.”

Having uttered these words, Rodolphe fell into a state of insensibility from weakness and mental distress.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAVERN.

CREEPING upon his hands and knees Malvicino forced his way through the entangled bushes, in hope of discovering the object of his search. His progress was slow, owing to the broken stones and interlacing brushwood, and being unaccustomed to the mountains he was soon confused as to his direction and landmarks. But his passion lent impetus to his failing strength. He beat about for some time without success, and was about to withdraw from the pursuit in despair, when the flutter of female raiment, at no great distance, revived his energies. On he went over briar and brake, into a.

more entangled wood, until he was suddenly arrested at the edge of a precipice. The Abbot paused as he rested on his hands and knees, at the brink of a fearful chasm, which yawned beneath for many hundreds of feet, and in the clefts of which the winter snow lay still unmelted. Malvicino drew in his breath as he stretched his head over the dizzy gulf, and realized his fate should any loose stone precipitate him into the abyss beneath.

“By the taxes of John XXII.,” he exclaimed, as he surveyed the valley, “how bravely yon flag on the convent floats in the breeze! I see patches of smoke in the valley, as if the soldiers of the cross had been mindful of their vows.”

Notwithstanding the cruel creed which enslaved Malvicino, the finer feelings of human nature were not wholly extinct within his soul, and even amid the ardour of his pursuit he yielded the involuntary homage of a pause to the wonders of Nature.

But those beauties were types of thoughts long foreign to his heart. Its kindlier instincts had been uprooted in the service of the Church, and the stamp of hypocrisy and passion made the furies within glow more fiercely than before.

“Ah, ye scenes of Nature,” muttered he, “ye speak to a seared heart. By Hildebrand, was I not once a boy? Had I not once the desire of doing what was right? Yea, did not some fair vision of purity light up my path before this cowl and gown were relentlessly forced upon me? Alas! I cannot stop—fate hurries me on—I love—I have advanced too far—possession or ruin—success or death are my only alternatives. But if I tarry here I shall lose all chance of finding my prize, and my head swims with looking over this precipice. No, I must advance, and I promised the soldiers some sport if they would accompany me. I think there may be some upland farms near here, which have escaped our

missionaries. So I will set an example of what a Franciscan can do in the Church's service. But let me first get out of this difficulty. I hear some one near me. Cattalin ! Cattalin !”

“How now, Holy Abbot? There ! my sword has cut away some of the bushes. You are close to a track which you have somehow missed.”

“By the Cardinals who quarrelled for two years before they could elect a Pope,” exclaimed Malvicino, as he gained the high ground, “this is better. Now let us do some work, and capture or destroy some heretics, or kidnap some for my institution at Pignerol, which has got some vacant beds again.”

“Ha, Holy Father,” replied Cattalin, “look ! do you see that ledge in the steep side of that hill yonder ? I have heard them speak of the cavern of Castelluzzo, which is in this neighbourhood, where the heretics used to camp in old times. I'll bet you a

flagon of Orvieto, there are some in there on their marrow-bones, and your girl among them, I dare say."

"Do not speak so profanely to your holy Father," replied Malvicino, "or I may keep the key of purgatory fast when you get in. I'll go with you to the place."

Following the winding gorges formed by the rugged spurs of the Vandalin, they were not long in reaching the place indicated.

"This is the spot, Abbot," said Cattalin, "but how are we to get down? There must be a way somewhere."

"There," exclaimed Lemna, coming up, "look on that ledge, that's a good shot I made; I ought to get promotion for it in the profession. I killed the young fellow as dead as mutton."

"This place looks steep, Father," interposed the other; "have you a mind to grasp these rocks, and go down backwards?"

"I have heard," rejoined Lemna, "that

there is a way from the top, through a hole or a tunnel of some sort."

"By Pope Nicholas III., who declared the eggs which the Franciscans ate were not their property, that plan will do; my sons, I'm not very fat, though I am not so slim as I was at eighteen, but I can take off my cloak if necessary. One of you can go down first, and if you stand at the bottom I can rest my foot on your head and get down so;" for the Abbot was afraid of his soldiers descending first and finding Ardoine. He was therefore determined to make the effort himself at all hazards.

"Well, tuck up your raiment, Holy Father; my sword here could lighten your skirts considerably, and you would then carry less weight."

"By Pope John XXII., who maintained that the Franciscan had property, I cannot part with an inch of my robe, although it's full of holes," replied the Abbot; looking down into the aperture, "it's a narrow and

an ugly place, and if three or four of those *barbets* should be at the bottom waiting to receive me, I'm afraid that my body might get a prick, which would be worse than a Turin lancet. Now, soldiers of the cross," continued he, tightening his robes, "take care. There, have you got hold of my foot? place it somewhere to the right. Can't you find a notch in the rock? How do these heretic wolves get down? By Pope Alexander, I'd rather be in my confessional box. Oh! take care, soldier, you're squeezing my foot which has corns. There, is this the ground? Soldiers," shouted Malvicino, "here is some one! But by all the deposed Popes, it's not the one we seek. Strike a light, that we may see who it is. It's doubtless some heretic who has come here to pray."

"One minute, Holy Father, and my flint will give us a light. There, at your service."

Seizing the light in his left hand, the Abbot stooped down to examine the body

which lay at his feet. He threw back the cloth which partially covered the face, and looked at it steadily without speaking. It was the face of an old man. His silvery hair lay scattered over the cold damp ground, and his eye seemed dim, as if his strength had ebbed for lack of food.

“By Leo, I remember my friend,” exclaimed Malvicino; “it’s the old pastor of La Baudène, who survived the plague some twenty years ago. This mountain air has agreed with the old fellow, for he’s had a long lease of life. A pestilent fellow was this said Rodolphe, and I remember how he silenced the famous Jesuit in that disputation at La Tour. Come, old boy, your sands are out now. Here, comrades, a drop of water or spirit, or we shall not make a convert of him. Open his mouth. There, pour a drop down his throat. I wonder at finding the *barbet* thus alone in the cavern. It’s hardly like those heretics to desert the old in this way. Nay, here’s a little

one near him. Take care, Cattalin, you'll be treading on the animal. Ah! and here's the ledge, and by Pope Leo here's the soul your bullet's shriven, Lemna. Kick the carrion down; there's a wolf down there waiting for his rations, I know. If not, a bird or two would like a dainty bit for their next meal. May the same fate befall me if I don't send him off! Not unlikely there are some more heretics hereabouts. I should not wonder if Ardoine has been here to look after him. We must look through the cavern."

"I don't see any other live stock in it at present, Holy Father," said Cattalin, "although from the look of the fountain and this sort of an oven, there have been some of them here. It's a roomy place, and I heard that several hundred lodged here when they were first turned out by Gastaldo's edict."

"What do you say, Cattalin?" asked the Abbot; "will you keep guard here, and see if you can catch her? If you do you may count on your helmet full of gold pieces."

“Nay, Holy Father, I dare not stay here alone, not even if St. Agatha were under the same cloak as myself; I feel already as if my hair were an inch longer.”

“Well then, lend a hand. There tie his hands together; now his feet; now lift him up, and I’ll shew the way. I think I saw the signs of a house of some sort, not very far off to the right. We’ll go there and consider what must be done, and how we can find the girl. Old fellow, I should not wonder if you know something about her whereabouts. We must give him a drop to recruit him, and then he must find his tongue. There take care—don’t hit his head against the rock. Be careful till our work is done. We must convert him. Now, Gaspardo, are you at the top? Haul up slowly—we’ll go to that building which I see a little way lower down on the right. The sun is sinking. Ah, soldiers! bring our other prisoner this way.”

CHAPTER XIV.

INDULGENTIA PLENARIA.

THE party of soldiers, under the guidance of Malvicino, soon reached the farm of Chabriol, where they determined to spend the night.

“Bring our prisoners this way, Cattalin; here is an outhouse, with some hay good enough for heretics and apostates. We will put you on duty over them; but do not snore. Wait; by all the Guelfic Popes, we’ll make your duty light. Their hands are tied and their feet. This, I think, will stop them from flying, if we tack the old one on to the young one. There! back to back, I mean, you stupid varlet.”



“Tack the old one on to the young one. There! back to back.”

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Malvicino paused as he looked steadily at Rodolphe and Echard, and a glare of malice crossed his features. He seemed filled with tumultuous thoughts. "Strange," muttered he, "twenty-two years ago! How fate seems to have linked my lot to his! though we have been rather at cross purposes."

"Ha, ha, master officer," continued he aloud, "you are a renegade. Our holy Church has discovered your flirtations with a daughter of Satan. Why did you not keep your appointment on the grave? That was not polite of you! By Pope Alexander VI., he would not have been so ungallant. He always put the ladies before the Church. But when did you make love? Was it when you delivered Gastaldo's edict that you caught sight of the blue eyes? Ah! those were fine scenes in the dungeon; to see you and Pianesse struggling together was bliss to the poor Franciscan. My friend, if he gets hold of

you, the rack will be too good for you, for he's still rubbing his forehead from the blow you gave him."

"Malvicino," replied Echard, "I have known you long. I saw you at the Marchioness' bedside, when her dying agonies convulsed her, and little did I think you were such a black hypocrite; but I ask no favours; if I must die, I thank God that I have light enough to cast myself upon his Son, whose blood cleanseth from all sin."

"So you have also learned to prate since you have kept gay company; your time has been usefully employed among the Apostolicals, as my friend the Dominican calls them. Well, sleep well, late godson of Pianesse, for you know not what the morrow will bring forth."

The voices of the riotous soldiers in the adjoining building drowned Malvicino's voice, as they were joined by a few more who had been roaming over the mountains in search of victims for their zeal.

“Well, Stephano,” said a dark man with very black hair and beard, on which the stains of blood could be seen, “I think I have earned the *Indulgentia Plenaria*, which our priest told us of last Palm Sunday. I felt I wanted it, and I have done my best to earn it.”

“How many do you reckon?” inquired Berru, who had rejoined the others; “not up to me, I’ll bet.”

“Don’t be too sure, although you ought to labour for the *Indulgentia*, for the Church opened your prison doors to do her work, and I think you find these green swards better than your stone walls and rusty irons. You may have a good roll, but others can work as well, for the sun was not made to shine on you alone.”

“No, you may go halves; but let’s hear your sum, and see if you’ve cleared your scores, and have really earned your *Indulgentia Plenaria*, as you call it.”

“My roll to-day is sixteen. I shot

three women in a wood on the next ridge, we cut up two or three of the little ones, flung two girls off the rocks, chopped off the arms and legs of two old men and women, and burnt a few of them in the farm itself."

"Well, a good day's work, I reckon."

"Yes, that it is. My arm aches in the service of the Church; and I've not got an empty purse. *E un mal giuoco dove nessuno guadagna.* I shall be able to settle my tavern scores now, and to clear off your claims. And have you heard, comrade, what Pancalier did? He found one *barbet* who had been in the wars; so he filled his mouth with powder, and when he put his match to it, oh! you should have seen the blow up; and," continued he, dropping his voice, "I'll tell you what Morosa did to a girl in the hamlet of Copiet."

"Good! the Saints shall have them in dominion is written, I believe, somewhere. But we've a couple in the

house here which our holy Father has caught ; we must stir him up to do something with them, especially as to-morrow's Easter Sunday."

"Easter, is it? That would be a good time to do God service by the slaughter of a heretic. Who are they here?

"There is an old fellow, one of your preachers of the religion, and a young man ; he has on an officer's uniform, and I think I've seen his face at Turin, but there's some quarrel between him and Pianesse about some girl, whom the Abbot wants to find."

"Does he want her for the Marquis or himself?" asked the soldier.

"Ah," replied the other, placing his finger on his nose, "you must not ask confession from those to whom we confess. I think a slip or two on their part will incline them to leave the door ajar for us, eh?"

"You're right, comrade. We must get him to send the old gentleman off the

crag to-morrow. There's a fine place above here—as splendid a leap as ever you saw.”

“Are our soldiers in all the valleys?”

“Yes, last night they were in every house in every commune except Rora; French, Irish, and several thousand Piedmontese. These *barbets* believe all you say, and they have received the regiments in every hamlet in Lucerna and Angrogna. Why, didn't you see the smoke to-day? Those clouds showed we had been doing our work pretty fairly. I wonder what the roll of slain heretics will be to-night. Can you guess?”

“I'm a good hand at guessing. I should say there'll be four thousand killed, but what's going to be done with Rora?”

“I don't know. I only know that there were no soldiers there last night, and therefore I suppose the heretics there have come off scot free. But now, comrade, with your leave, I'm tired. Pull out your rosary, if you have one, and just say a

Pater and *Ave* on my account : after my work, I may be excused saying my prayers. And by the Popes and Abbots I've made a good many say their prayers to-day for the last time. Many of them prayed like saints even when they were half dead. Really it makes me shudder to think of it. But there, that's enough. Good-night."

CHAPTER XV.

THE CHALET.

ECHARD lay bound back to back with Rodolphe, and his raven hair presented a striking contrast to the silver locks of the old man. It was a solemn union, for it was probably the last night that they might pass on earth, and a dread fellowship is the fellowship of suffering and death! They lay motionless for some time though both were awake, absorbed with the forebodings of the gloomy future. Easter Saturday was on the wane, and its morning tragedies had been added to the catalogue of human crimes, which have been accumulating for nearly six thousand years, until the knell

of man's history sounds once and for ever. The leaden clouds obscured the moon, and cast their dusky shadows on the half distinguishable objects, but the mountain blasts were lulled, and the spines of the firs nodded placidly in the sleepy breeze. Rodolphe looked through a small rent in the wooden side of the *châlet*, and sighed as he beheld the sullen heavens, but he had not withdrawn his gaze before the dark clouds brake, and a few bright stars shone forth in the limited portion of the firmament visible to the prisoner.

“O God!” said Rodolphe, “I thank Thee for those emblems of immortality: ‘they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.’ I trust that I have in some measure fulfilled the solemn charge allotted to me. Father, for Christ’s sake forgive me where I have failed, and deliver me from bloodguiltiness. O God! I thank Thee

that my Saviour hath wrought a finished salvation on which I can safely rest, and that his blood cleanseth from all sin."

"O my father!" whispered Echar'd softly, "if by such a name I may address one whom I have not seen before, let me hear you speak further of those truths; I would fain be your disciple, and depart in the faith of your creed: for we may perish together to-morrow."

Rodolphe paused, and was silent. His frame trembled at the sound of that voice, as if it recalled strange memories and awoke conflicting emotions.

"Father," continued the young man, "if I offend you not, nor interrupt your meditations, speak words of truth to me, and lead me to your rock of comfort."

Again the old man trembled violently, and a tear stood in his eye as he listened to the request of his companion.

"Son," replied he, "your voice sounds sweetly, and not unfamiliar to my ear. It

reminded me of my eldest daughter, and I felt overcome to have home recalled as I hover on the brink of death, when I was banishing all thoughts of earth."

"Alas! my father, you are old and I am young, and yet we are both knit together by suffering. That word home is indeed one to stir our sorrows, though I have never known it in its full sweetness."

"But I have, young friend; I have seen my children grow up around me, I have had my children's children on my knees, who, as you know, are Nature's second gifts to the old, to be their last and sweet remembrance of life. I have seen many sorrows in my life, for I am eighty-five years old and my hair is grey. I can look back to the horrors of the plague; but when I compare that time with these present sufferings, I feel let me fall into the hand of the Lord and not into the hand of man."

"Tell me, if it be not too painful to you, what sorrows have brought you here?"

“*Infandum renovare jubes, regina, dolorem.* I lived on the other side of the Pelice, among those who were banished by Gastaldo’s edict. Oh, how brightly the New Year began ! when my whole household came and knelt before me to receive my blessing ; and things went well with us until the 24th, when this edict ejected us in three days. It was a bitter,^sbitter comment on our being strangers and pilgrims on earth. Oh how I feel its poignant emphasis myself to-night, alone in the hands of strangers, bereft of my daughters, having seen my grandchildren cut off before my eyes. I feel that to-night is my last night on earth, and I can truly say, ‘Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.’ ”

“Tell me, father, about your home scenes ; let these memories rather lighten than increase our sorrows.”

“Ah, it would take me a long time ; you know an old man’s tongue runs on when it talks of the past, especially when

it has been bright. All my six daughters dwelt around me wedded to six brothers, one in heart and love. No angry jars rent us in twain, and from the children I received those tokens of love which are so grateful to the old. Ah, when I think of the flowers plucked from these heights to be my morning offering, when I review the anticipation of my wants, and hear again the evening strains which soothed me to rest, when I remember a thousand little kindnesses, then an old man's dying blessing must rest on that daughter's head, and in my last prayer I shall whisper my beloved Ardoine's name."

"Ardoine! Ardoine! Do you know Ardoine? Oh, speak and explain yourself."

"I do indeed; she is my granddaughter, and was like the child of my old age."

"Oh then, aged father, you have a son near you. I know Ardoine—I love Ardoine. How can I tell you all? I saved

her from danger, I escaped from the convent of La Tour last night, and was with her on this mountain not many hours ago. I went to rescue some unhappy woman, and we got separated, and I have been taken prisoner. Speak low, for Malvicino, who has captured us, is seeking her for some fell purpose of his own. Oh, if she should be captured! God grant that she may escape, though I may never see her more."

"Have faith, young man, and trust in God. I am old, and I have found Him to be a faithful God, though his providences are deep and unsearchable. Let us pray to Him to shield my darling girl. She was my pride and my delight. She ministered to me with the tenderness of a daughter, and could I but see her once more and give her my dying blessing, I should die happier."

"Alas, Father Rodolphe, it is impossible."

"Say not so, for with God all things

are possible. Look now, my son, I am an old man, and speak as on the verge of eternity. I was Moderator of these Churches, and during my last night on earth I will remember my office and preach the gospel. May the Lord give me some fruit for my last earthly effort in his cause ! Let my words then sink into your ears. ‘Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.’ Salvation is a free gift, and a finished work. We must not add to it, nor can we take from it. We must accept it, free, full, perfect, as the sunshine ; we must receive the benefit, and give God the glory. ‘The wages of sin is death ; but the free gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.’”

“It is glorious, venerable Moderator, to hear you speak thus, and so different to the advice the priest gave me at Rome, when I went to confess, to ease, if possible, a burdened conscience. Are there no merits, no

alms, no good works, which we must bring to God to earn heaven ?”

“None; this would be to insult Him. God is the Saviour, man is the sinner; the one character is our shame, the other God’s glory. If we could save ourselves, why should Christ have laboured in the furnace for us? This is the doctrine which I have preached for fifty years, and it has been our fathers’ creed for centuries, drawn from the Word of God.”

“Oh, father, speak, speak on. I love to hear your voice, for I feel the yearnings of a son towards you; it beguiles the tedious hours of the weary night. But, oh! let me ask your forgiveness if I have taken any part against you. It was I who enforced Gastaldo’s edict on the 24th of January. It was I who entered the farm of La Baudène, and spake words of menace in the midst of your loving household. And yet it was against my inner feelings. But I am changed now. I too have suf-

fered, but gradually I have learnt more of truth, and I have come out from that Church whose bloody zeal I have long looked upon with abhorrence. Oh forgive me ! Accept me as a son and a convert.”

“Peace be with you ! I bless God that He hath allowed me this great privilege of declaring his truth, even to the last. The Lord strengthen thy faith, and fulfil all thy counsel.”

“Father,” continued Echard after a pause, “rebuke me not if I make one request ; death, it is true, seems before us, but still my heart is young, and throbs with hope ; and should we perish, the thought would afford me consolation in my last moments. Grant your consent to my union with Ardoine, should it please God to open a way of escape. I love her, and have twice saved her life.”

“Alas ! thou must be young, if at this moment thou canst think of marrying

and giving in marriage. But I was once young myself. My son, I would gladly meet your wishes, but there is an obstacle in the way."

"What obstacle, save our danger?" anxiously interrupted Echard.

"Your religion. She promised her mother on her death-bed, that she would not wed a Roman Catholic."

"But I am not that, father, I am a Protestant from conviction. From the lips of your family have I heard truths which have deepened my former misgivings. I trust I feel the working of the Spirit of God within me, and the force of that text which I found on my dungeon walls, 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.' Only this very morning, when I beheld the smoking valley of Lucerna, did I forswear the communion of that Church which has wrought such deeds of hell. Indeed, father, I am one with you. I am your son in faith. Oh let your dying

voice accept me as your son by blood likewise! It will at least soothe my spirit in the interval before my death."

"Peace be with you! Should it please God to spare your life, wed her with my consent and blessing, for it would then be manifest that it was the will of God."

"O Lord!" sobbed the aged pastor, as the tears flowed down his cheeks, and his spirit for a moment seemed to succumb, "my heart is vexed within me—Thou hast visited me in Thine anger. Spare my loved ones, and her whose young heart I have trained in Thy fear."

A tear glistened in Echard's eye, as he felt the old man shake from the tumult of his feelings.

"My son," said Rodolphe, after a pause, "I know not yet your name. Tell it me, that I may pray for you by name."

"It is Echard, the adopted but rejected son of the Marquis of Pianesse."

“Echard, I shall perish but you may escape, for God is great. I bequeath my Bible to Ardoine. Study it yourself. I would address you in the language of Mollio of Bologna; ‘if you have no money,’ said he to his friend, ‘pluck out your right eye to enable you to buy the Word of God, and read it with your left.’ My son, I have an old ring which has escaped the spoilers. It was given to me by the Duke’s father, when he took refuge with us some years ago during the rebellion of ’39, which threatened his capital. I wished it to be an heir-loom, but I will give it you on behalf of Ardoine, and as a token of my dying blessing. Can you move at all? Is not your right hand more free? Do not be too quick or I may drop it, and we shall not be able to find it or to pick it up again. Have you got it?”

“Thank you,” whispered Echard with intense feeling, “thank you for this precious token, and for your comfort. If you

have helped to bring one soul to your Saviour, your last night on earth shall not be barren, but may bring forth more fruit than many years of your public ministry."

"God grant it may be so, my son ; now rest yourself, and gain strength for suffering or action, as it seemeth best to our Heavenly Father."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FATHER OF THE VALLEYS.

THE hour which marked the commencement of Easter Sunday, the Resurrection Jubilee, had sounded from the Catholic towers which stood proudly defiant amid the desolation and ruin of the Waldensian temples, and Echard, wearied with the excitements and fatigues of the past night and day, had fallen asleep. Rodolphe lay motionless by his side, engrossed with visions of the past, with prayer for the welfare of his friends, and with spiritual preparation for death and eternity. Malvicino's band were scattered in the adjoining farm, save Cattalin who guarded

the captives. He lay in one corner, stretched upon some straw, in a heavy slumber, with his hand grasping his loaded musket.

It was past midnight when a female came noiselessly out of the loft, which formed the upper part of the outbuilding, and was still partially filled with the hay of the preceding year. She stood for a moment at the top of the stairs, as if irresolute what course to pursue, and paused, with fixed eyes, half-opened lips, and bent head, as she listened to detect the tokens of danger.

It was Ardoine. The sight of Malvicino's soldiers had driven her from the place where Echard had left her, and in her consternation she had wandered about, until, faint and tired, she had hidden herself among the hay in this mountain *châlet*.

She gently descended the creaking ladder, but started back suddenly when she

saw two prostrate figures blocking up her path in the chamber beneath. She hesitated whether to proceed and escape to Rora or to return to the loft, and await the light, and the disappearance of these marauders. A break in the clouds cast a passing gleam of moonlight on the figures. On recognizing the countenance of her beloved grandfather, Ardoine trembled like an aspen, and supported herself by some projecting woodwork, but with the intuitive self-control of woman in seasons of danger, she did not betray herself by any unguarded movement. Her joy at seeing the friend of her youth was soon turned into horror, on realizing that he was a captive in the hands of the Abbot. Her eyes were so riveted to that familiar countenance, that for some time she saw nothing else. At length an officer's uniform glistening in the pale moonlight caught her eye. She beheld a young man who was asleep, and tied back to back with her grandfather.

She dared not ask herself who it was. The beats of her heart interpreted her doubts, as sensations different in intensity and quality to those with which she regarded the old man swelled within her breast. Shall we blame her for being human? Dare we hazard a censure because the instincts of our common nature asserted their changeless power? She loved her grandfather with a depth and purity that would have enabled her joyfully to minister to him in a dungeon for a lifetime, but Echard touched those chords which lay entwined with the mysteries of her being, and had evoked that latent master passion which, when pure and true, endues woman with a second nature.

Ardoine had received Raynald's homage with the complacency of routine, for she received instead of requiting; but now the recesses of her heart had been explored, and her maidenly modesty expanded its chaste energies in the gush of a virgin pas-

sion. She yearned over the sleeper, and sought, amid the inventions of love, a method for his release, as she stood breathless in that lonesome place.

What various types of human nature did that upland farm contain on that Easter Eve: the Abbot, whose rest was broken by his disappointment, ever and anon in his unwelcome vigils apostrophizing this or that Pope; the soldiers gloating over their deeds of blood; the Irish dreaming of those valleys below, of which they would despoil the heretic; the aged Rodolphe communing with his God; Ec-hard full of the buoyancy of life, but with a heart groaning under the shipwreck of his love; Ardoine, like an angel on poised wing speaking to the sons of earth, like a star above the rising evening mist, by her mute beauty, unconsciously preaching of the brighter hopes of the unknown future.

“Grandfather,” said Ardoine, bending

over Rodolphe, and gently whispering in his ear, "grandfather, it is Ardoine."

"Ah! God is great! The Lord be praised, I did indeed pray that I might see your face once more, and bless my child before I die."

"Oh, talk not of dying, dearest grandfather. I will go and bring help. I have been obliged to flee from the soldiers, and I took refuge among the hay in the barn, as I was too weary to proceed: little did I think that you were so near."

"Child," whispered Rodolphe, "I feel that my end is approaching; to-morrow's light may see me enrolled among the glorious company of martyrs. But I am steadfast in the faith; Christ my Saviour is a very pleasant portion, and my severance from Him is now short. My child, what are you going to do?"

"Oh grandfather! I will do what you think best. I believe that there are no soldiers at Rora, and part of our family

took refuge there under Uncle Janavel's escort. I will flee there now, and bring him to your rescue."

"My child, you cannot expose yourself thus amidst such dangers and at such an hour."

"Cannot expose myself, dear grandfather? Am I to think of myself when it may be your life trembles in the balance? and," continued she hesitatingly, while a blush suffused her face, "moreover, you are not alone I see."

"True, for his sake you are bound to do what you can, and we must use all proper means so long as God continues us in this world."

At this moment Cattalin uttered a heavy groan, and turning round on his side, ground his teeth in his sleep, and with clenched fist struck the straw. "Kill them—kill them. Down with them. Kill that old man hiding behind that tree. Save that girl—there that one with the golden hair. She will do for me. Don't

tell that Abbot of Pignerol where she is. Oh, spare the little one. I hear her prattle. She is burning. You have thrown her in the fire. Wretch! I am a father. I have children. Oh! I saw her smile. I hear her scream. What does she say? 'Ardy.' What's that? She falls back. Oh, let me take her home to my wife. I lost a girl like her. Hang the *barbet*. I did it at La Baudène."

Having uttered these words Cattalin relapsed into his former lethargic sleep. During the soldier's ravings Ardoine's cheeks had become ghastly pale as with the hue of death, and in her agony she looked fearfully on the man, and then on Rodolphe and Echard.

"Child," continued Rodolphe, after a solemn pause, "he who is near me is no stranger. He has told me that he loves you, and has inquired concerning the truth of our faith. Do you know him?"

"I do indeed, grandfather, and have

cause to thank him with all my soul, for twice has he rescued me from ruin or death." And she proceeded to narrate their meeting at La Baudène, and their escape from the convent.

"Do you love him, child?" asked the old man.

"The night must hide my blushes, father," replied the girl; "he has shown devotion to me, and I feel that if ever I give my heart to another's keeping it must be to him alone."

"Well, I trust God will grant you this ray of hope in the midst of the dark clouds that hang over us. But now you must do what you can for his safety."

"Oh! what can I do to save you both?" exclaimed Ardoine in a subdued tone of anguish, as she convulsively clasped her hands together. "Grandfather, despair has made me capable of any effort. How can I set you both free? What can I do? Where can I go?"

“You can do us no good here, my child, surrounded as we are by the Abbot and his soldiers. Moreover, I am so weak, that if we were free, I should be a sad burden to my friends; and you see we both have manacles on our hands, so that you cannot release us.”

“Oh! what can I do? Let me wake him, that we may consult together.”

“No, dear child, listen to your grandfather’s advice. Time is precious, and must not be lost. Let him sleep, I will bid him be of good cheer when he awakes, and after all, perhaps his hopes of escape may yet be realized. Hasten to Rora, where you will perhaps find Janavel. Our only hope of escape rests on him and his brave band. Take those steep paths, which lie off the beaten track, down which none can venture but the mountaineer, and which I now recommend you to take, though in old days, my affection would not allow you needlessly to risk your life there.”

“Dearest grandfather, my head will be steady and my feet sure. I will take the path that leads through the chestnut wood, and then skirting outside Villar, cross the river near the oak bridge ; I shall be far up the other side before the light breaks.”

“Come near, my Ardoine,” whispered Rodolphe, “it is the last time I shall see you on earth. Will you promise to try to meet me on the right hand of God in the great day ?”

“I will,” replied she in a solemn voice, “I will, the Lord helping me.”

“Then seek first your Saviour, cherish your Bible, and the creed of your ancestors ; never, never desert your father’s faith. The things eternal will make up for the things temporal.”

“Fear not, grandfather ; the passages I have long read to you morning and evening are stamped upon my memory.”

“Stay, let me send a message to my

dear ones. Alas ! when you next see them, there will be some gaps in our once loving and happy home. But I may have met them first on the other side of Jordan. Give the remnant my dying blessing, and say that in the hour of death I prayed for them all by name. Bid Martha hope, for she will yet smile and change her garments of mourning before she dies. They may divide my property among themselves. My Bible, let that be yours, Ardoine, to remind you of your grandfather.”

“I need no token, grandfather, to do that ; while sense lasts, its fondest memories will be yours.”

“Come near, child. There, kneel down in the flicker of that light ; come near. My hands are tied, I cannot place them on your head. There, rest your cheek against me, throw your golden hair upon my white locks. Kiss me. The blessing of God, who hath loved us and given us everlasting consolation, rest on this daughter of Israel,

and may He now give his angels charge concerning her, that she dash not her foot against a stone. Remember to-morrow at twelve is the hour when they talked of doing something on the crag of Castelluzzo. Hasten to Janavel, and God be with thee."

The maiden rose from her knees, but her tears glistened on the furrows of the patriarch's cheeks. She paused one moment, and cast a look of love on the other sleeper, sighing as she saw his chains, and then looking upward murmured a prayer for his safety.

"Rora, father, Rora, father," were her last words.

Gently stepping over Cattalin, she noiselessly glided into the open air, and disappeared under the shadows of the neighbouring trees.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PURSUIT BY TORCHLIGHT.

“RORA, father.”—Such were Ardoine’s last words to her grandfather, and they fell upon the passive ear of the half-awakened soldier. He heard them as it were mechanically, and did not attempt to analyse their meaning, until he caught a glimpse of the retreating figure. Then the idea flashed upon him that she was the heretic of whom Malvicino was in search. Rushing into the adjoining farm, he awoke the Abbot, without much courtesy.

“By Pope Alexander, who drew the ocean line for the Kings of Castile and Portugal,” exclaimed the Franciscan, “get

thee hence, Satan, and let me have a nap in peace, for I am weary. Who is it? Is it you, Cattalin? Where are your prisoners?"

"They are safe enough, if your cuffs are made of English steel; but I can tell you of the bird you seek. She has been in our cage, and we did not know it."

"Speak plainly, man. What is it you mean? Curse your metaphors!" retorted Malvicino angrily, half rising and leaning upon his elbow.

"I mean that she was hidden in yonder loft; that she has been speaking to the old fellow there, and that she's just made off into the wood hard by."

"By Pope —— who—— Call the guards. Here Stephano, Gaspardo, Berru, Sebastian, here soldiers, soldiers, the girl the Marquis has sent us to capture is close to us in the wood: out, you hirelings, and if any one can bring me the chicken, he shall have a dozen pistoles in gold."

Seizing some faggots the soldiers has-

tily formed them into torches, which were speedily seen like flashing specks swaying to and fro on the hill side, now eclipsed by the thick coppice, now casting a tremulous light for many yards around.

“I think,” continued Cattalin, “that she has made for Rora, which, if I mistake not, is on the other side of the valley. I thought that I heard something like ‘Rora, father, Rora, father.’”

“In that case, she must have gone out this way to the right. Here, soldiers, into this wood to the right; scour it well, and look under the branch of every tree.”

“By every blessed Pope,” continued the Abbot, “it’s enough to make St. Anthony revile. To think that the girl has been within a dozen yards of me, while I was snoring there, and now the chances are that she’s got clean away. Rora—that’s something to have a clue to her whereabouts. I suppose others of the family have gone there, and that she has made

an arrangement to meet them. But I must see if I can get any information out of my prisoners."

Rodolphe meanwhile perceived that Ardoine was discovered, and awaking Echard, hastened to inform him of what had transpired and to put him on his guard.

"My son, my son," whispered the old man, "thank God and take courage, Ardoine has been here. She has escaped and has fled to Rora, or the other side of Lucerna's valley. She will seek some of our brave people, and will send help to deliver us if possible. Your hopes may yet be realized; lift up your heart with mine, that God will protect her and that her efforts may save you at least, if not both of us, from a cruel death. You have this night been looked upon by her, and prayed for by both of us."

"Oh, father, has she been here? Oh! then I trust she may escape. But why did you not wake me? It would have been a

comfort to have seen her and to have spoken to her. Perhaps I may not see her again before I die."

"She wished to wake you, her heart prompted her to soothe you; but time was precious. This would have increased the risk of betrayal. You would have found it difficult to have restrained your feelings. I have acted for your safety."

"But I should have liked to have seen her. It would have been a solace to me at this trying time."

"Pray for her, and believe that I have acted for the best. Listen! the soldier is awake. He has overheard her, he is repeating her last words, 'Rora, father.' He has awakened Malvicino and the other soldiers. Was I not right? You know I have had more experience of danger than you, and one's feelings must not overbalance one's judgment. Listen! what a noise there is! He has awakened the others. They will come hither to ex-

amine us. Strengthen yourself in God, and I need not tell you to be prudent. They are coming ; pretend to be asleep, and delay them as much as you can."

"Come, young fellow," shouted Malvicino, addressing Echard, and kicking him with his foot ; "don't be shamming sleep. It will be best for you to make a clean breast, if you mean to keep your skin without plaisters. Where's that girl?"

"What girl?" asked Echard, listlessly opening his eyes. "Who's this speaking to me about a girl? Who is she? Where am I?"

"Come, don't play the fool; you know that Ardoine has been here, and that she has told you her plans and movements. You had better tell me all, for I have only to nod to these fellows to send you, you know where," said the Abbot, smiling grimly, and pointing with his forefinger to the ground. "As it is, I expect they'll not be satisfied if they don't make a convert

of one or other of you, when the sabbath light comes. We know you've had company here this evening, and if you want to save your bones tell us who your visitor was, and what your conversation was about?"

"Trouble me not," replied Rodolphe; "my hours are well nigh numbered. Wreak your wrath on my poor body; for I have done with earth."

"That shuffling will gain you nothing, you old sinner. You know that Ardoine has been here. She is your granddaughter. The Marquis has sent for her; for her sake he will save the lives of your family, and restore your confiscated property."

"My darling girl is not here. Oh that she could whisper a word of comfort into the ear of her dying grandfather!"

"One or other of you had better make up your minds to disclose your secrets, or we will fling you from the crag above, and then it will be too late to repent."

Echard, acting on Rodolphe's advice,

and remembering the importance of time to the fugitive, resolved to detain him as long as he could.

“Malvicino, your statement surprises me. I have not been conversing with mountain girls this night. These iron bands which you have put on me are too sharp for me to think of comfort.”

“These subterfuges shall profit you not. You have one last chance for your life. This soldier Cattalin heard the words ‘Rora, father, Rora, father,’ and then he saw a girl steal out and disappear among the trees. She has been here, and conversing with you both. You know it. So tell me at once all you know, for it will not only save time, but it may save Pianesse from being childless in a few hours,” added he, smiling at his bitter sarcasm.

“Nay, did you not see that I was only just awake when you came to me? What was meant by, ‘Rora, father?’”

“You know better than I; I suppose

she has made an assignation with you there. But you will never keep it—you won't anyhow—not while I have you ! I'll keep your appointment for you ! Old man, will you be more communicative ?”

“ Well, Sebastian,” said Malvicino, addressing the soldier, who, panting and breathless, threw himself down on the straw, “ you have come back alone. How's that ? You may never have as good a chance again of getting a commission so easy.”

“ It's all very well, Holy Father, but promotion is too dear when it's bought with a broken neck, or even a twisted rib. We scattered ourselves in the wood, and I raced over the rocks as if a Spanish bull were behind me. Look, here is a lump on this shin, and it's already black. Oh ! how it smarts when I touch it. Would that your holy water would heal a bruised limb as it will an aching conscience, and scare the devil. And I sprained my foot when I

knocked right against a fir tree, and some of the droppings of the pine torch have burned my hands. I heard the others halloaing in the distance, and swearing at you and the girl. Look here's Gaspardo coming in limping like a converted heretic."

"Holy Abbot," groaned the latter, "my bones are ready to make jelly. We scoured the whole wood, and not a trace of the young witch could we see. We had better try and finish our night's rest, if these black places will let us sleep. I have no glass to look into, but I fear that my beauty's spoiled, and that I shall not be able to show myself to Giovannina for a week, and then my rival the tavern-keeper will perhaps gain his suit."

Several soldiers gradually staggered in, exhausted with their fruitless efforts. Two, however, were not so easily daunted.

"Courage, comrade," said Cattalin to his companion, "it will be a grand thing if we can secure this prize. Shall we take her

back to the holy Father, or straight to Pianesse ?”

“Let us catch her first; I don’t see much of her.”

“I think we’re on her track. Here, hold up your torch. There are some twigs which look as if they had been just snapped off. Stop. I hear a crackling of brushwood before us.”

“You’re dreaming of the good day’s work you’ve done, and the heretic’s wine has given you a second sight.”

“The Virgin rot your tongue,” retorted Cattalin, angrily; “if this heretic has not seen us, she will hear us and escape. Why should we not run as fast as she? Silence! Look, there’s the chicken. There, look in that streak of moonlight, there’s a figure resting on that stone. Softly; let us take off our shoes. You go down the hill and cut her off. I’ll give you three minutes, and then I’ll advance on this side. We’ll get her; only

we have not settled about division of profits.”

He turned round, and found that his companion had gone.

“I must keep my eye open, or my friend will leave me to whistle. Well, I can try it for myself. I’ll approach her and capture her myself, and see if her lips are as sweet as Malvicino would lead us to suspect.”

So saying, with his loaded arquebus in both his hands, he approached the rock on which Ardoine was leaning while she recovered her breath to pursue her long and dangerous path.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SAMUEL VACCA.

ARDOINE paused for a moment to recruit her strength, and bent her head against the cold slab of a projecting rock, as she lifted up her heart to God in prayer for the safety of those dearer to her than life. Her meditations were, however, abruptly interrupted by the shouts of the soldiers, as they issued from the *châlet*, and the flashing of their torches on the hill-side inspired her with gloomy forebodings of the failure of her efforts. For some time she seemed spell-bound, as if in anxious suspense, but the approaching voices warned her of her danger, while a pallid flicker

among the brushwood betrayed the stealthy advance of some of Malvicino's band.

"*Corraggio!*" muttered Cattalin, who was determined to atone by his promptitude for his past negligence, "I think she does not see me, and I'll secure the prize all to myself. Curse this brushwood, what a crackling it makes! I am near enough to make a rush. You sulky cloud, why can't you break and give us some more light, at a critical moment in a man's life?"

With these thoughts Cattalin crept forth from among the low birches, and rushed towards his prize. The panic-stricken Ardoine bending low darted into the thicket, followed by the mercenary. He gained on her rapidly, as his superior strength enabled him more easily to overcome the resistance offered by the entangled copse.

Ardoine heard the noise of a mountain torrent dashing merrily against its stones, and remembering the number of massive

fragments on the other side, trusted that she might elude her pursuer among those intricacies which were familiar to her from childhood. She darted across a tottering bridge, composed of two pine trunks, rudely thrown across the chasm, and which, though bending beneath her weight, were nevertheless secure to her airy and practised tread. Cattalin followed, setting his foot upon the bridge on one side at the moment that Ardoine was stepping off on the other. He rushed madly along, but missing his footing in the treacherous moonlight, fell with all his weight across the slippery pines, snapping one of them in twain. Down he dashed into the seething torrent, striking his head against a jutting stone, and breaking his twisted limbs. He lay on the ledge of a large rock in the bed of the channel, which intercepted the stream. The water washed over it in fitful splashes at intervals, when it surged over the wounded man's face and filled his

mouth and nostrils. His convulsive spasms indicated that life lingered, and rebelled against this desultory drowning, but he was unable to move. The limpid mountain stream, in mockery, rinsed his mouth and cleansed his wounds, and tinged with his gore went to join the river in the valleys, and to mingle his blood with those of his unhappy victims.

“Ah, little child,” murmured he in the last gleam of consciousness, which often precedes death, “why did I kill you, why did I cast you into the fire at La Baudène? I am punished. Thou art avenged. Eternity is before me. May that couple in the *châlet* ——!”

Again came the splash of the tidal wave, like that of a waterfall, from time to time surging on in a greater volume, sweeping him off the ledge on to a stone below. His struggling rattle is heard!

The morning sun shines upon carrion for the beasts of the field or the fowls of the air.

Ardoine hastily pursued her path so as to reach Rora if possible before daylight. The darkness did not impede her, for the chasm, the torrent, the gorge, and all the distinctive landmarks of this landscape were familiar to one who had often pastured her flock on these mountain slopes. She descended the craggy heights of the Vandalin, and crossing the Pelice, began to climb the steeps of Brouard on her way to Rora. She was, however, driven behind the buttress of a rock by the sound of voices, which grew more and more distinct.

“*Gnaffe*,” said one to the other, “these cursed *Gazares* have given Christopher a lesson. I got a ball from that long culverin in the calf of my leg, and it was as much as I could do to creep out of the hollow tree in the wood, where I sheltered all night.”

“Who was that fellow that led them on?” inquired his companion.

“They call him Captain of the vineyards of Lucerna. He peppered us well;

I should think we left a good many of our fellows behind us, and he showed his generalship in snugly pitching upon those stones in that narrow gorge."

"Ah!" growled the other, who was a Frenchman, "I wish I could get a rosary of these Huguenots' ears like our forefathers. I could say my *Paters* better with such beads."

"Look! look!" interrupted the first speaker, "here are some more of our fellows. Pianesse must have heard of yesterday's mishap, and he has sent another battalion. Oh! look at them in that lower bend down there. There must be six hundred. They'll do the work, brother!"

The sun was just rising and tinting the east with its gorgeous hues, and the sheen of the fresh dew sparkled in the light as did the polished morions of the advancing troops.

Ardoine crouched beneath the over-

arching stones in silence, as she heard the shouts and oaths of the soldiers on their march to Rora. They gradually ascended the steep track, passing the stone where she was hidden; and their long line was visible for some distance on the mountain side, effectually intercepting her onward path. Well might she experience a thrill of anguish when she felt the fruitlessness of her mission, and the terrible fate impending over Rodolphe and Echard, as well as over the beloved remnant at Rora. Oh! agony to think of the lives of those loved ones, depending upon her exertions and she powerless to help! To proceed to Rora was impossible; her life and honour would be in danger, and all possible hope of being useful would perish. In the tumult of her mind she was willing to grasp at any passing shadow of hope. Villar was the only place which she could possibly reach. There was an old Roman Catholic there, Samuel Vacca by name,

who had formerly been archdeacon of Saluces ; she had heard of his kindness and honourable feeling, and would throw herself on his mercy as a last resource.

Having obtained access to his presence she threw herself at his feet :—

“Sir,” she exclaimed in a voice of agony, “I come and cast myself upon your protection, and beseech you to save me. I am a poor Vaudois girl. I belong to the religion. My life is in danger ; but I have heard that you do not approve of these massacres ; I come to take refuge with you ; I ask you for the love of God, and for the credit of that religion which you profess, not to say of human nature, to extend protection to a helpless girl, who falls at your feet. Oh ! save me from your soldiers.”

Vacca looked upon Ardoine with a smile of benevolence, and silently wiped away a starting tear, which had been excited by this plaintive appeal.

“Fear not, my daughter,” said he, “your confidence shall not be misplaced. You shall not say, with sad satire, that our religion has totally extinguished our humanity. Let it be known that there is one among us who would check these ruthless deeds of blood. Convert you I would, but by other weapons than the sword and the rack. If our cause be good it will bear the light, and must stand or fall on the merit of argument. Fear not, my daughter, you shall remain here until your friends can receive you in safety.”

“Ah sir, how can I explain to you my grief? My grandfather is a prisoner on the Vandalin, and they talk of some dreadful deed to-day on Castelluzzo. Oh! sir, I saw soldiers marching to Rora where my friends are.”

Ardoine could withstand the strain of agony no longer; her mind for a moment trembled in the balance, and then exhausted itself in a paroxysm of delirium.

“Grandfather, I’ve killed you. I could not reach Janavel. Don’t bless me with your dying lips. Ah! Echard, you may well look at me with horror. Mother, I’m coming to you. Echard, you are dead, and I will die also!”

“Ah, my Church, my Church, woe unto thee!” sighed the old man, closing his ponderous missal. “Petrarch’s lamentation over thee is too true, in his 110th Sonnet :—

“Fontana di dolori, albergo d’ira,
Schola d’errori, e Tempio d’Heresia
Gia Roma, hor Babilonia falsa e ria
Per cui tanto si piagnie si sospira:”

Verily thou art fallen. It was only a day or two ago that Placido Corso was lamenting the horrors of which he himself had been an eyewitness. Alas, those lines of that Carmelite monk which used to make me so vexed when I was a boy, I fear are too true :—

“Omnia venalia nobis
Templa, Sacerdotes, Altaria Sacra, Coronæ,
Ignis, Thura, Preces, Cœlum est venale, Deusque.”

Poor girl, I will protect her. I will summon my servant, and put my chamber at her disposal."

Ardoine's presence, kindling some memories of early childhood in his breast, had touched the underlying human nature in that shrivelled priest, whose affections had been seared by the Church of Rome. He smiled as he looked upon his helpless charge, and tasted a pure satisfaction which reminded him of his boyish delight, when in early life he had earned his mother's smile and blessing by some little act of thoughtful kindness.

Throughout the whole of Easter Sunday and for several days afterwards, Ardoine remained prostrate by intermittent paroxysms of raging delirium, brought on by exposure and agony of mind.

CHAPTER XIX.

EASTER IN THE CITY.

ETERNITY, the inheritance of God, is an omnipresent NOW, without a date, and without a succession of events; man's history is that of a fleeting hour, soon merged into the past, revocable then only by the aid of memory and the artifice of dates.

It is Easter Sunday, April 25th, 1655. The sun of Italy has risen in his might, and rejoices as a giant to run his race. His beams fall on the sparkling bay of Naples; on the orange groves of Sorrento; on the olives of Tuscany; on the blue Alban, Volscian, and Sabine ranges; on

the purple Apennines ; on the crystal Alps ; on the rugged rocks of Castelluzzo, and on the crimsoned, yet blackened valley of Lucerna. The stainless light shines on the Vatican, that palace of art, out of which peal the thunders that deluge Europe with blood, causing widows to weep over desolated hearths, and orphans to brand with infamy the memory of Rome.

We stand in the most magnificent temple on which the sun has shone since the year 70, the erection of which has occupied 176 years. The eye is lost as it wanders round its spacious dome, the base of which bears the inscription, in colossal mosaics, "*Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram ædificabo Ecclesiam meam, et tibi dabo claves regni cælorum.*"

Two days ago, from that upper balcony, the Church was displaying her treasures, the *sudarium* of St. Veronica, the relics of the true cross, the lance which pierced the side of Jesus of Nazareth, and at the exhibition

of these infallible items, the crowd bent the knee and worshipped. A magnificent *baldacchino* with four spiral columns, wrought by Urban VIII. out of the spoils of the Pantheon covers the high altar, and the idolatry of Rome Papal, akin to that of Rome Pagan.

The eye roams among the pillars of the lofty arches, the bases of which are enriched with sculptures and mosaics. Every recess forms a chapel, filled with the pomp and heraldry of some noble family. That bronze statue which glistens in the refracted light is St. Peter himself, mournfully lamenting the decay of his right toe, which has been long suffering violence from the lips and foreheads of his deluded worshippers.* This is the Church of St. Peter's

* Some antiquaries state that it was cast by St. Leo out of the bronze statue of Jupiter Capitolinus, and other writers of more recent date assert that it is the identical statue of Jupiter himself, transformed into that of the Apostle by the mandate of the Pope. — *Handbook of Central Italy*.

at Rome, in which if Peter himself were now to preach his own Epistle, he would soon be removed from the marble pulpit, to the damp cell and the bloody rack of the Holy Inquisition.

The blast of a trumpet is heard, and a gorgeous procession rivalling in colours the tints of the stained glass, with which the sun chequers the marble pavement, sweeps up the church through lines of soldiers. Its central figure is that of an aged man, borne by eight persons on a portable throne, wearing on his head a triple crown, and preceded by two peculiar fans, composed of ostrich feathers bespangled with those of the peacock. The high altar glitters with its golden chalices, and with lights in the exquisite candelabra of Cellini, while the fragrance of incense perfumes the atmosphere, and the fitful cadences of music float through the arches, adding to the sensual intoxication of the astonished beholder.

Alexander, having been robed and disrobed with many formalities, approaches the high altar, and the Vicar of Christ chants High Mass.

“Really,” said one red-faced man, with a scarlet hat under his arm who was standing near the throne which the Pontiff had vacated, “what a tremendous length our psalms and lessons are! our holy Father does not get through his parts so fast as his predecessor.”

“Do you think we were right in electing a Chigi?” replied his colleague. “He says he’s opposed to nepotism. But, Archbishop, you are a modern Mæcenas; do not you think the divine Angelo is wrong in the foreshortening of that arm, there in that picture over the head of Rospigliosi.”

“Hush, hush, Cardinal,” interposed the first speaker, “the Holy Father is about to elevate the host. Give me a pinch of snuff, and come and dine with me at the Braschi Palace this evening. You shall taste

some Orvieto, which has been ten years in the Colonnas' cellar, and which will recruit you after your praying labour."

"I will come, for the flesh is weary ; you see praying for so many others, as well as for oneself, is a heavy tax. I wish our blessed Virgin would give us more aid, while we are on outpost duty down here in this world."

"Hush, the Father is saying the words of consecration."

A dead silence reigns throughout the assembled thousands. The Pope bends his head and his body ; moves his hands in different directions ; kisses the altar ; and then taking a golden vessel, lifts it in the air. All feel the momentary solemnity of the scene. It is the elevation of the host. Suddenly the silence is broken by the piercing blast of the silver trumpets of the choir, and the ranks of the noble guard present their swords, resting upon one knee, while the scabbards of their

sabres clank against the marble pavement. The people fall upon their knees, and cross themselves, while the Pope elevates a golden chalice in a similar manner.

After the celebration of mass, the Sovereign Pontiff proceeds, at twelve o'clock, to the balcony of St. Peter's. In the piazza, which is, perhaps, the finest in the world, for its size, its gushing fountains, and massive colonnades (begun by Bernini, two years after our present scene), are gathered upwards of one hundred thousand persons, presenting a spectacle at once simple and sublime. They have come to see an old man stretch out his hands, while their credulity believes that his blessing can grant them absolution from their sins.

The various regiments of cavalry, and infantry, the equipages of Rome's nobility, the Colonnas, Orsini, Frangipani, Ludovisi, Barberini, the representatives of the different courts of Europe, the sunburnt and picturesque peasants, from all parts of

sunny Italy, the more sombre pilgrim from beyond the Alps, with their scallop shells and wallets, all these combine to form an artistic and dramatic *tableau* of human life. The heaving throng is silent and uncovered, and the most part kneel upon the ground, while the Holy Father proceeds to bless the multitude :—

“May the holy Apostles, Peter, and Paul, in whose power and authority we confide, intercede for us with the Lord.”

He pauses, and the choir chant the Amen, which floats over the prostrate thousands.

“Through the prayers and merits of the blessed Mary, ever Virgin, of the blessed Michael the Archangel, of the blessed John the Baptist, of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and all Saints, may the omnipotent God have mercy upon you ; may your sins be remitted, and Jesus Christ lead you to eternal life.”

Again the Amen rings out in rich and mellowed strains.

“Indulgence, absolution, and remission of all your sins, space for true and faithful repentance, hearts ever contrite, and amendment of life, may the omnipotent and merciful God afford you.”

“Amen.”

Then rising, and stretching out his hands, and making the sign of the cross in front and on each side as he pronounces the holy names, the Pope continues—

“And may the blessing of the Omnipotent God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, descend upon you and remain with you for ever. Amen.”

At the word *descendat*, the Pontiff stretches out his hands towards heaven, and then folds them on his breast. The Cardinal Deacon then comes forward and reads in Latin and Italian the Bull of the Pope, conceding a plenary indulgence to all those who have worthily assisted at the

Sacrament. The indulgences are cast among the people. The military bands break forth, and the thunder of the guns of St. Angelo declares that the Pope of Rome hath blessed the human race ; that is, hath given his apostolical benediction, “*Urbi et orbi*,” and later the fiery dome of St. Peter’s, visible across the *Campagna* in the glistening twilight, heralds the same fact to the peasant, watching in his hovel with his wife and little ones, on yon Alban range.

CHAPTER XX.

EASTER IN THE CONVENT.

THE chamber in which the Marquis of Pianesse reposed in the Convent of La Tour was darkened, and the Archbishop of Turin entered with that stealthy step, the shrinking homage which man involuntarily renders to death.

“The Church’s salvation to you, my Lord,” whispered the Archbishop; “accept the blessing which our Holy Father will soon be pronouncing from the balcony of St. Peter’s on this our grand Christian festival. How is your head to-day? I think the swelling is less. I half expected to see you at mass.”

“I made the effort to come,” replied the Marquis, “but was obliged to leave, as the chanting made my head throb so much. But I want to hear the news, and the results; for, with your leave, as you don’t emphasize the *third* commandment, I’ll employ to-day in an official despatch, and send it off to his Royal Highness.”

“Here’s a fellow outside can give us information, for he’s just down from the mountains.”

“Then usher him in.—My friend, relate to us how the Church’s work has prospered in your hands, and whether you have sent these *Insabathas* to the place from whence they sprang?”

“It has fared well with us, my Lord,” replied the man, smiling grimly. “We have had a body of chosen apostles in these Irish; they have earned anyhow a decoration of the Holy Ghost.”

“Hold your tongue, and reply to the

question you are asked. Did the soldiers get into their quarters?"

"*Cospetto!* we got in easily enough, and were well housed. I don't know when I had a more comfortable supper than on Friday; saving your presence, my Lord Archbishop; for our long walk made us break our fast, and I was really sorry the Holy Mother Church made me cut up the old and the little ones at daybreak. But when once we began we soon got our blood hot, and went at it with zeal. *Dalli!* For my part I killed two or three children belonging to that farm of La Baudène, who, I suppose, had taken refuge in the mountains."

"Archbishop," interrupted the Marquis, in a feeble voice, "our counsel has come to good effect, and the soul of the Marchioness will now rest in peace. Her last bequest has been nobly carried out."

"It has, Marquis; these scenes may

form a source of consolation to you on your dying pillow. You certainly have carried out most accurately the programme arranged at the last meeting of the *Consilium de Propagandâ Fide, et Extirpandis Hæreticis*."

"The only drawback is that the apostate dog has escaped me, and has carried off the girl; I fear there is treachery in our camp, for from what Mandolin said, he had been drugged by Malvicino, after he had heard the traitor discoursing with the prisoner. I have ordered out a party of soldiers to capture that plotting Abbot of Pignerol; I hope they have found some traces of him, but I have not heard anything yet. I have put such a price on both their heads as shall be a dowry for the daughter of the man who catches them. If I can only catch him I'll make my saddle out of his hide, and my bridle of the tanned skin of the apostate. Come here, soldier, have you heard anything which can help you to form an idea how many were massacred yesterday?"

“I heard several discussing it, and those who reckoned our troops, and the population, say that we killed about four thousand.”

“Four thousand! Think of that, Archbishop. I told you we would have a Bartholomew on a smaller scale.”

“*Gloria in excelsis Deo*,” rejoined the primate; “I think yours is one of the most complete victories the Church has yet achieved; your ingenuity, your skill, your forces, and the success which has attended your self-denying efforts, will place your name on the records of history as one who has earned nobility less by his birth than by his own meritorious deeds. You will cause a thrill of joy in the Vatican and through the College of Cardinals, and your name will be a popular Catholic toast in Italy.”

“Oh, Archbishop, I am an unworthy instrument; those whom the Church uses for her great designs must not rob her of

the glory. I hope you will grant me absolution, and secure my salvation, and not let me suffer on my death-bed what the sainted Marchioness did. If this had happened before, it would have soothed her at the last; but our work is not complete. There's that village of Rora, which somehow I have overlooked. I thought I should have tricked them yesterday, and I sent five hundred men against them, but *per Baccho*, our troops got beaten by only a handful of some six or eight. That's a blot on my escutcheon. I have sent another band to-day, so that I think before night-fall we shall add Rora to the number of converted places, and to the heritage of the Church. Here, give me pen and ink, and I'll write and explain that it was a mistake, and then we shall trip them up easily."

So saying, the Marquis took up his pen and wrote:—

"If they meant to attack you, it was

not by my orders. The troops which I command never made any such wicked attempt. It can only have been a horde of Piedmontese vagabonds. You would have done me a pleasure if you had cut them in pieces.”*

“ There, I’ve signed and sealed it. That will be enough to satisfy them, I think, and I’ll send this to them by a messenger, who, if he is quick, will overtake Count Christopher. Let him read it to them first, and don’t let our men move on for an hour or two afterwards, so that they may be in a state of security.”

“ God speed the work, Marquis. But look, if your eye can bear the light. The valley of Lucerna still smokes. There among those trees the smoke arises in dense and black columns, as if the holy work was going on to-day. You have been favoured in having zealous soldiers, especially those lambs of the Church from

* These are the very words Pianesse used.

Ireland. I should like a guard of them in my palace. Ah! look yonder, on the crag of Castelluzzo; there is a large group. Perhaps they are going to convert a heretic. If so, Marquis, the Virgin grants you this compensation, though you are, as it were, on your sick-bed. You will see the spectacle at a distance without fatigue or labour. Here is your glass, my Lord."

"Yes, the hour is come," continued the Archbishop. "These Apostolicals, these *Insabathas*, these *Gazares*, these *barbets*, who have so long defied the Holy Roman Church, must now perish. Ah, there's a movement. Are they going to throw somebody off? *Grazie a Dio*. We shall uproot them at last, and I shall get a Cardinal's hat!"

Reader, that little Church still clings to those changeless Alps!

CHAPTER XXI.

EASTER AMONG THE REMNANT.

“ See you that village yonder,
With the sunshine on its roofs? It smiles, like one
Who boasts of some short-lived impunity!
Glittering it stands among its orchards, bowers,
And vines—look down—’tis Rora! ay, ’tis Rora!”

Aubrey de Vere, FALL OF RORA, Act III. Scene 4.

A SOLITARY bell still rings among the mountains of Rora. In all the other hamlets and villages in the valleys of Lucerna and Angrogna there is silence on that Easter Sunday;—sighs there are indeed of the bereaved, and the groans of the dying mingle with the shrieks of the wounded, but no bells summon the Protestant worshippers

to celebrate the crowning truth of their religion, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The flocks have been scattered, the pastors massacred, and of the very temples not one stone is left standing upon another. Rora has as yet proved a mountain sanctuary, for it has been overlooked by Pianesse in the distribution of his billets, and as yet the upland hamlet is unstained by blood and unscathed by the flame.

That plaintive bell! last protest of apostolical truth in the ear of heaven! its echoes ring among the rocks as of yore.

Alas! for the last time. The Roman Catholic in his cruel zeal might purposely have spared that one bell, for its sound caused refined mental torture to the wounded and dying, who were lying on those hill sides. It reminded them of the past, and of what had ceased to be.

That solitary bell! boldly vocal, when all the others in the valley beneath have perished in the wreck. It must have thrilled

the hearts of the forlorn worshippers who had assembled there to bend the knee to their father's God.

“My beloved brethren,” said Janavel, who had quitted his post of observation for the celebration of Divine worship, “let us gather together our sad relics and worship God on the Sabbath-day. Truly the sights of yesterday may cause even a man's heart to weep. Lucille, Renée, bring Etienne along with you, and the other survivors of our ravaged household. Let us hear the voice of comfort out of God's Word. Raynald is on the look-out below. I fear Pastor Léger has met with a disaster and cannot come.”

The mournful remnant then gathered together and entered the temple in unbroken silence.

“My friends, we have assembled here, and it may be for the last time on earth; I will endeavour to supply our Moderator's place.”

“O Lord,” exclaimed Janavel, after he had ascended the pulpit, “look upon this remnant and have compassion, for our tears are tears of blood; for thy dear Son’s sake look upon all those who have been afflicted and tormented. Keep us steadfast in hope of thy eternal glory, and after we have suffered may we be exalted to thy right hand for our Redeemer’s sake. My friends,” continued Janavel, “our cup is bitter, because it is one of actual experience. But be steadfast. If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him. Heaven is our home. Oh! look to the state of your own souls, whether you have made your peace with God through Jesus Christ. My friends, I can hardly address you; my heart is full, my feelings overpower me. I look around me, and I see the sad remnant of that once happy home where I dwelt surrounded by so many loved ones. Oh where are you all now? Father, father, art thou gone? Would that I could risk my life for thine

—sisters Marguerite, Madeleine, and my little ones——!

“O God, do I forget the sanctity of this place? Nay, thou God of the fatherless and widow, let our hearts cry aloud to thee. Such sorrow as ours, from its cause and from its very excess, is, as it were, holy. Oh, my friends, pray that we may be one in Christ, and look forward to perfect union in God’s eternal kingdom. Pray, one and all, for yourselves and for each other. Let us be true to one another, and do what we lawfully can to the last to protect our shrines and the lives and honour of our wives and daughters. O God, who givest not victory to the many, strengthen us that we may be like Gideon, and that at the rebuke of one man thousands may flee.”

“Father,” exclaimed Raynald, hastily coming in, “there is a knot of men on Castelluzzo. I fear there is some execution. I cannot exactly make the figures out, but I

think I can see a monk and an officer, something like the one who delivered Gastaldo's edict, and who robbed us of Ardoine ; some soldiers and an aged man, who seems bound together hand and foot. Oh, father, my heart has its misgivings. What if it should be my grandfather ?”

“ Oh, name it not, boy, name it not. Let not anticipation add anything to the horrors of the actual present ; but the Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice. But look—look Raynald, danger is at hand. I see the glistening of armour in the ravine below ; they will attack us as they did yesterday ; pray for us sisters and mothers, and let your voices ascend to heaven, audible amid the din of battle. They are coming by Casulet. I have eighteen men to-day ; dispose yourselves in three bands of six, four musketeers and two slingers in each. Quick, to the defile, and the Lord of Hosts defend us.”

CHAPTER XXII.

EASTER ON THE MOUNTAINS.

MALVICINO passed the remainder of the night in a paroxysm of rage and disappointment at the narrow escape of his victim, for the thought that she had been almost within his very grasp was more exasperating than the consciousness of being completely baffled in his pursuit.

“Well, soldiers,” he exclaimed, addressing his band, “we must not omit to do the Church’s work. Bring your prisoners out, we’ll breakfast *al fresco*: it must not be said that we left this refuge standing. Then pile up the hay, fill the rooms with

straw after you've made some tinder of the furniture and floors."

"It's a pity it's not in the night," remarked Stephano; "it would have made a glorious bonfire."

"It would have reminded me of the illumination of St. Peter's, which I saw three years ago," observed Gaspardo; "and which I suppose takes place to-night."

"Ah!" muttered Berru, "it's a pity there's no old hag inside; there were several yesterday grilled on the straw on which they lay. It's a fine day, this Easter Sunday. I fear the sun will put your fire out, Holy Father."

"You must prevent that; heap on wood and stubble. I see one of the walls swaying. This job will tire you and take some time; so after this, we will go to the heights of Castelluzzo."

After some hours the farm of Chabriol was a total wreck, and over the blackened remnant of its lintel might

be written the sacred adage, "*Pro conversione hæreticorum!*"

"Arrah!" shouted Tracy. "Agragh," as he stepped into the middle of the ruins, and threw up his ragged cap into the air, exclaiming, "God an' the blissed Mother, and the thrue Church for iver."

* * * * *

Castelluzzo stands on the northern side of the valley of Lucerna, shooting its rocky ramparts high above the neighbouring craggy offshoots of the Vandalin. We stand upon its beetling brow, and enjoy the scenes of Nature in her own imperial fastnesses.

To the right of us is La Gardetat, to which the ridge of the Alp La Garde forms a background. Further off rises the peak of Le Serrès, edged by the bulwark of the Palavas, the landmark of the Col de la Croix, the pass from Italy into France. Col Bariound rises in majestic outline, with its sides dappled with stray waifs of floating mist, which add to the effects of the lights

and shadows of the landscape. Le Pis, Geannet and Chabra Roussa are next discerned in their individuality.

Continuing our semi-panoramic sweep, we observe, nearly in front of us, Monte Friouland, with its patches of winter snow still lying in its narrow ravines, while Cassulet and Brouard form part of its lower and descending ridge. We trace the path winding up the slopes of Brouard leading to the village of Rora, which lies in front of us, hidden by the opposite range, and behind those meadows surnamed Pian Pra. The hills then trend downwards into the valley and plain, and on our extreme left, having crossed the valley, we observe Les Côtieres of St. Jean and La Vachère. The eye rests on the hamlets half buried in the chestnut groves, which dot the scene. Villar, Charnices, Bonnet, and Taillaret, lie scattered about in their irregular groups. The hamlet St. Marguerite adjoins the capital La Tour, the head quarters of the

Roman Catholic army of occupation. Beyond are the white buildings of Lucerna, Lucernette, Fenil, Bubiano, and St. Jean ; while bounding our view and rising in solitary caprice from the horizon is the conical hill of Cavour, which nature has placed as an outwork to these impregnable retreats of a fugitive church. Other hamlets stud the plain, beyond the point where the Clusone and the Pelice join the Po, and far in the misty distance we discern a white speck, which assigns the position of Turin.

The eye traces with gleeful wonder the winding of the Pelice, some thousands of feet beneath, whose roar is distinctly audible upon the heights of Castelluzzo ; while the white circle of its foam battling with the stones adds another hue to the varied colours of the landscape. Immediately beneath us are massive fragments, once portions of the rock on which we stand, dislodged by Nature's own artifice, after the lapse of centuries, then thrown in sterile solemnity

at the base of the rock, whose alpine pinnacle they once crowned. Dark and drear patches on the landscape are the proofs of the deluge of flame and ravage of yesterday, while many a cheerful homestead, visible on Good Friday, has by Easter Sunday been completely erased from the scene.

“Come, old white-haired hypocrite,” shouted Stephano, addressing Rodolphe, after they had reached the brow of Castelluzzo, “you’ve been a *barbet*, and disputed with the great Marco Aurelio Rorengo. So here’s your pulpit; now wave your right hand, as you do at the end of a long-winded sentence.”

“You can preach to the wolves and eagles,” interrupted Sebastian with a grin; “or rather, it may be, they will have something to say to you.”

“What’s the weight of the old fellow?” asked Ribaud; “he’ll not roll as well as one of our large cannon shot, but if he won’t roll, he might fly.”

“In that case you should make him lighter; send him down to the valley to get his teeth drawn; shall I take one of his grinders out with my poignard?”

“Comrades, comrades,” exclaimed Parelles, “the Virgin will blush to see you treat an old man in this way; you seem more like devils than men. You can earn your indulgence without all this extra work. The fresh air and the sunshine ought to be enough to fellows like you, who have been so long rotting in prison.”

“Hark to the blasphemer, Holy Father; shall we add another saint to our calendar to-day, and fling this fellow into purgatory or hell? What were we let out for if it was not to convert or kill?”

“Well, gentlemen, what are you afther at all, at all; and do you understand me, old Masther? have not I larnt your blarney sence I came into this counthry—as I come from the kings of Connaught, who go right up to Noah—if we had this cripple on the

EASTER ON THE MOUNTAINS.

Macgillicuddy Reeks, with a kit of our own boys, we'd put all his weight into a rowlin stone and make his banes like a tater heap."

"I wish," answered Gaspardo, "that we had his vile church and people below us here, and that we could pitch him in among them to say the Amen."

"*Amassa Barbet, Amassa Barbet, che ne se veul pas fé Christian,*" shouted Berru, in which the others joined in one fell chorus.

"God of our fathers," murmured Rodolphe, "the road which leads to thy kingdom is rough. Let thy presence brighten it, gracious Saviour, and give me the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Lord, lay not this sin to their charge, but bring them to the same Saviour."

"What's that your saying, old yelper?"

"I am only commending my soul to my Saviour, for I see that you will have

my life, and I pray that this sin may not be laid to your charge."

"Sin laid to our charge! the Pope tells us to do it, and St. Peter up there books it to our credit. We shall win the Virgin's smile, for our priest tells us that our blessed Lady hates nothing but heretics, and that if a heretic came into heaven by accident, she'd walk out."

"Come, come, you ranter, leave that sort of thing to our priest here. He knows more about what the Virgin thinks than you do. Lend us a hand here. Have you got your tackle all ready?"

"All right. Here is the cord; come now, white pate, don't be restive. I'll warrant you for an egg at Easter."

"Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," said the patriarch, without answering the taunt.

Seizing the captive, two soldiers held him while two others proceeded to tie his feet together.

“Hold, hold,” said one; “that’s not the way. There, give us the old fellow’s head, now open his knees, duck it down. *Corraggio!* There put his head on his pillow, now then, pull away.”

“The Lord is on my side,” gasped the preacher of the gospel, “I will not fear what man can do to me.”

“Stay, you’ll break his back, poor wretch,” said Parelles.

“Put shoes on your own geese, you chicken-hearted heretic. Don’t you see he wants a nap? Is not his head snugly jammed in between his knees?”

“Hold on! *Dalli!* now for the cord. Stretch out his wings, if he is to fly. There, tie the arms to the legs, this fashion. That’s Pianesse’s new style.”

“What’s the time?” inquired Sebastian; “it’s getting on for twelve by the look of the sun; there, I hear the guns of the fortress beneath.”

“By Pope Pius IV., who gave the cup

to the laity of Austria, down on your knees, you sinners," cried Malvicino; "are you so graceless as not to remember that it's Easter Sunday, and that our Holy Father's in the balcony of St. Peter's giving his blessing?"

"Well," said Ribaud, "I thought I felt a warmth come over me inside, just as when I get a drop of good old Monte Fiaschone."

"Cease your blasphemies, or we'll gibbet you. Down all on your knees and cross yourselves. '*In nomine Domini, Filii, et Spiritus Sancti,*' Amen," said Malvicino.

"Amen," replied the soldiers, as the band of murderers knelt silently in the sight of heaven, and after a pause rose together.

"Now then, after prayer work; is not that the order, Father Confessor? That's what some of you keep thundering out in your pulpits."

“Stay,” said Malvicino, “my office is to the last merciful. We must absolve ourselves by offering him a chance of repentance.”

“Not much use, these heretics are as hard as this granite.”

“Rodolphe,” said Malvicino, “recant and promise to go to mass, and we will take you home again.”

“Never, never. I have served my Master eighty-five years, and I’m not going to fall off now.”

“Look,” continued the Abbot, holding out the crucifix, “you know this figure. Kiss this, and I swear to you by the Pope of Rome that not one hair of your head shall be hurt.”

“Never, never,” said the old man; “I will never worship the base image.”

“Come, don’t be obstinate; for your fate trembles. Cry out ‘*Ave Maria, gratia plena, ora pro nobis.*’ Come, there can’t be much harm in saying a word to the Virgin,

and look, this sword cuts your cords in no time, and you shall have that farm where the lot of you lived, all to yourself."

"Never, never," rejoined the old man ; " Father of heaven, is it not written in thy Word, ' Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life' ? "

" It's no use, Holy Father," interposed Sebastian. " He'd better send down the measure of his grave-clothes for his daughters to stitch. Now make your will. Who is to have the farm ? or will you make your codicil in purgatory, for you'll be there till the day of judgment."

" Aged father, recant. Here, Ribaud, place this crucifix in his hands ; make him clasp it. You might," said Malvicino, whispering to him, " for your daughters recanted in the convent, and they have reaped the benefit."

" You speak to one who knows the arts of Rome," answered Rodolphe. " Lord

Jesus, reveal thyself to me as to thy martyr Stephen, and let thy strength be made perfect in weakness."

"Come boys, lift him up; there, have you got him? Now mind the word—off. There, just see that you work well together. Now for our flying eagle. Halloa! Satan, look out and catch him, for he's off now."

"Och now, and stop, let me git a howld on him—give me a leg. Is there not a hundhred days' indulgence promised? no, what am I thinkin' of, not a hundhred, but a planary indulgence to all who help at the holy wark. If I touch the owld boy it will make me score nine and a half, for this one is not all to myself at all."

"Stop, soldiers of the cross," said Malvicino. "Rest your burden. Look up, *barbet*, before you die. Do you see across the valley yonder? You can trace those fellows creeping up the hill side. Those are some of the Duke's soldiers. They have

got a message for the loyal town of Rora. Any commands to send there?"

"God preserve my daughters," whispered Rodolphe, "and any others of my loved ones who have taken refuge there; God bless my little grandsons; God shield thee, my Ardoine, thou canst not rescue us. Echard, turn your thoughts to your Saviour, for you will soon meet him."

"Look there," continued the Abbot, placing his hand so as to shade his eyes, "how they creep along. One can almost tell who they are. It is evidently Count Christopher who is at their head, and I warrant he'll do the Church good service this bright Easter Sunday."

"Halloa!" exclaimed the Abbot, after a pause, "what's that? They have come to a stand-still. I see the flash of the arquebus. It comes from above. It is not our fellows who are firing. All ye holy Popes of Rome, some of them fall! Why if the dogs are not showing their teeth.

Now mark the rolling stones, how they crash among the trees and snap those birches. I see a band on the upper rock. There is one tall man surrounded by eight others. Pope Celestin ! ten men can't repulse five hundred—half a division."

"It's Janavel," whispered Rodolphe to Echard, who lay bound by his side : "God preserve and bless my boy," and he opened his eyes and looked steadily in that direction, though he was suffering agony from his unnatural position.

"God of Israel, who strengthened thy people oft against the enemy, uphold us in our weak efforts."

"The devil's plague light on them," cried Malvicino ; "they flee. I see the leader and his eight men leaping among the rocks like goats. Satan fights for those mountaineers."

"Say rather," added Rodolphe, "that it is God who fights for us. Thank God if He has again given us the victory. Not

unto us, but unto thy name give the praise. Gracious Father, how thou canst give consolation in the darkest hour !”

“They flee, they flee. I see them crushed beneath the stones. They leave their dead. Why there must be sixty bodies strewn on the ground. Brethren, let us gain the victory here. To atone for the slaughter of the saints, let us, in the name of the Holy Popes, do the Church’s vengeance on this hoary-headed heretic. Now, soldiers, are you ready ? If so, off.”

“One—two—three—and away,” cried out the soldiers together.

“God bless my daughters, my Ardoine, my little Etienne,” cried Rodolphe, as he swayed through the air ; “thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through——” The rest was not spoken in human hearing.

There was a pause. The soldier’s hands were empty. There was one human being less upon that rock. A fearful form, something like a man, bound in the shape of

a ball, with his arms projecting, is cast athwart the sky. It hovers for a moment in mid air. It descends again. Down it goes with terrific speed. It is not long in the air. It strikes the tree on which the body of the little Bertin had rested all night. The stiffened corpse is shaken off, and falls into the abyss, rolling onward until it jams among the rocks many thousands of feet below. That human mass is hurled against a crag, and rebounds. Lower down it dashes among the trees, snapping the branches, leaving a stain of blood on many a twisted bough, as well as scattered hairs upon the escarped rock, near which none have ever been save the dauntless eagle. Again it rolls off from crag to crag until at last it is arrested by a tree projecting from a large block of stone. There is Rodolphe, the father of the valleys, the Moderator of those Churches, a martyr!—his silvery hair is clotted and gory, his face gashed and seamed, his limbs

broken. He is caught in the pathless precipice and he lives. He opens his eyes and they rest on his beloved valley, on the towers of La Tour, and upon the hallowed scenes of a lost home in the distance. He sees the passers-by thousands of feet below as they return from mass. His own parishioners may see him, but relief is hopeless—none could scale that height, where the head turns dizzy and the blood runs cold. The very chamois could not reach him. He has done with the world. He will soon be in heaven. But oh, had human ear been near they might have heard sounds. The gasping of prayer sounds upon the trackless crag.

“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Take me to thyself. Thou wilt make amends for all. Lord, I am thine even unto death.”

Then did he think of New Year's morn, and of the words which he spake. They were too true; he knew not that Easter

Sunday would have verified them in so awful a manner in his own case.

The sun arose the next day, and shone on a human mass, in which lingered life ; it circled the heavens, and the second day it still shone on a living martyr in his rocky fastness, immoveable, wounded, dying. The angels have not yet wafted his spirit into Abraham's bosom. The sun smites him by day and the moon by night. The dews of night wash his bloody cheeks and wet his hair, and the April sun dries them. On the third day there is a corpse in that consecrated niche. The ravens of the valley fly around the rock, they have come for their delicate morsel ; while the vultures of the Alps may strip the remains and fight for the carrion. A few bones bleaching on the bare crag are the martyr's witness in the sight of heaven. What matter ? his soul is in heaven, and his body shall be raised again in glory at the resurrection day.

Reader, do you tremble and turn from

this revolting picture? I have only told you a truthful fact of history, and which, like most incidents in this book, took place in the valleys of Piedmont in the year of grace, 1655.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ANTONY MULLENIER.

THE actors paused—all for a moment were chilled with the horror which even fallen human nature felt at the scene, but the withering influence of superstition deadened the misgivings of most, and bade them rejoice in the act, as doing service to God, and subservient to the interests of the Holy Church.

“Father Abbot,” said Ribaud, “we ought to commemorate this pious work by raising a heap of stones or a cross on the brow of the hill. How shall we manage it? There are some strips of wood lying about. Here Sebastian might

run down to that farm and bring us some larger pieces and a nail. Wait, I can split this block in two with my sword."

"I don't see that we need take so much trouble," observed Sebastian; "here are plenty of large flat stones, and we can make a heap here, as the hunters and travellers do on the tops of the different passes and cols. We can raise one in five minutes which shall be seen from La Tour. It will be the old man's monument, as he'll get no sepulchre down there, I trow."

"He will," rejoined Malvicino, in a tone of sarcasm; "he'll get Jezebel's grave, the stomach of the birds of the air, but the dogs, I think, cannot reach him. Ha! ha! *Gnaffe*, here comes some wood; the length will about do. There, let us rivet these pieces together, and place this sign of our salvation on the mountain's brow, which has been consecrated by this deed of faith."

Echard, who had witnessed the martyrdom of Rodolphe, lay upon the ground

bound hand and foot, and had resigned himself to a similar fate. In his last moments he strove to remember the truths which Rodolphe, Martha, and Ardoine had interpreted, and which had gradually absorbed his soul. Ardoine doubtless had been captured, and it was in vain to expect deliverance. He must strengthen himself in the God of these maligned heretics, who, by their steadfast faith and heroic conduct shamed the merciless fanaticism of the soldiers of Rome; he would implicitly rest for the remission of his sins, and for his acceptance before God, upon the finished sacrifice of Calvary.

“Better make a pair of them, Holy Abbot,” said Ribaud, casting wistful glances at Echard; “an old man and a young man. They slept together last night; they can take a noonday walk in company.”

Malvicino looked at his rival, and, after a moment's hesitation, remembering the

failure of his past plans, agreed to the soldier's proposal. "It must be so," muttered he to himself; "I was destined to change his life. Shall I tell him all I know before he dies? But why should I? I want no more than to get him out of my way. Does not one heretic content you, soldiers?" added he aloud. "Will you spoil this fellow's uniform? Ah, well, if your holy zeal will give the Virgin another sacrifice, you must have your way. By the Great Western Schism, I should like the Marquis to see our vengeance. We know that this officer's uniform is nothing but the devil's livery, and hides an apostate's and a craven's heart, like that of an anti-pope."

"Hold on, Ribaud," shouted François Lemna; "let us first untie his hands, and then do them up in the new style."

"What, will you roll him up like the other? Let us have a change; it's no use doing the same dodge twice; let us send

him face downwards from this crag. It's a good long jump. Give me that stone and I'll throw it off; there—it takes six or seven seconds to reach the bottom."

Two soldiers then seized Echard and, tightening his cords, lifted him from the ground by his arms, while two others grasped his legs.

"Will you not give him your blessing, Father, on this bright Easter-day?" asked Lemna; "he will fly better if you will make him lighter by taking a few of his sins off his shoulders."

"May the holy Gregory, and Innocent, and Clement, who stand near the door of purgatory, bless thee, thou young man, and although thou hast deserted thy mother who bare thee, yet in consideration of thy youth may St. Peter turn the key and bid thee enter the kingdom of heaven."

The Abbot then made the sign of the cross over him, and the soldiers bowed their heads. They smile as they look at

their second victim. His hours are numbered! A few seconds will see his mangled remains a feast for eagles and a prey to wolves. He is suspended in the air with his face downwards. He shuts his eyes as he half overhangs the precipice, and feels the cool wind which ascends from beneath. They are swinging him to and fro for the last time.

“Stay, comrade, my hand is slipping,” exclaimed Sebastian; “wait a minute, and let me get a firmer grasp.”

“Arrah now, thin, what’s this scrimmagin? Niver do it twice, says I. I shall have to fill my bellows agin with wind for the job.”

“Now, boys, have you got a good gripe? Are you all together? Pitch him clear of that jutting crag, so that he come down on the ground whole.”

The last heave was being made when a party [of soldiers leaped suddenly upon the crest of the hill, and a stentorian voice rang on the cliff—

“Malvicino, I arrest you by order of the Marquis. Soldiers, make this Abbot your prisoner.”

“Comrades,” exclaimed the Abbot, in a fury, addressing his followers, “do you hear this impostor? I, who was confessor to the late Marchioness! What can this knave mean?”

“Soldiers,” continued the leader of the band, “this is our man. Seize him, you know the price put upon his head. Mandolin confessed that you drugged him, and the Marquis of Pianesse will have revenge for your treachery and wickedness.”

“Friends,” exclaimed Malvicino, rallying his hirelings, “will you let the holy Church be insulted in this way? I grant a plenary absolution to any of you who knocks down one of these vagrant impostors from this height. By Pope —— I will fight myself. Now, my brave mercenaries, grasp your weapons and protect your Abbot.”

The pursuers were not disposed to lose their prey, and endeavoured to surround the band of Malvicino. The latter, urged on by the Abbot, resisted, and the struggle of battle raged upon the mountain top between the two opposing sections of the same persecuting Church.

They drifted away in the struggle from the place where Echard lay, bound and motionless, who clung with increased tenacity to life, as his hopes suddenly revived with the appearance of this second band.

Meanwhile Antony Mullenier, who had joined Malvicino shortly before the martyrdom of Rodolphe, slipped away from the broil and hastily approaching the prisoner, cut Echard's cords asunder with his sword.

"Quick, fly, Echard, I remember the kindnesses I received from yon poor old man at the farm of La Baudène. Would that I could have saved him; for his sake I will risk my life for you. The Marquis threatened to flay me alive because I gave

the *barbet's* son a glass of water in the prison of the convent. But haste, I must flee with you. See, they are still fighting on the rock, but I think the Abbot and his Pignerol bandits are getting the best of the scuffle."

"Ah, beloved Ardoine," muttered Echard, as he sprang to his feet, "I will still hope that I may see thee yet again. I will seek thee at Rora, and rescue thee from danger, or avenge thy death and perish by thy side."

CHAPTER XXIV.

JANAVEL.

“Waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.”—HEB. xi.

“FIVE of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. And the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them, and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword, and they shall fall when none pursueth.”

These words were spoken more than three thousand years ago, and from time to time in the history of man they have received a rare fulfilment. This was the case in the incidents which we are about to

record, and the reader is reminded that nothing is brought before him in the three following chapters but the authentic facts of history, bordering though they do on the incredible and fabulous.

Rora is the smallest among the communes of the Waldenses, lying further south than the rest, and almost isolated amid its mountains. The craggy tops of the Sea Bianca rise above it, and Monte Viso is just eclipsed by the towering summits in whose sweeping ravines the little village lies embedded. It is separated from the valley of the Po by Mount Frioul, upon whose steep slopes its outlying hamlets are picturesquely suspended over the torrent of Lucerna, and peep forth amid the embowering chestnuts.

On Wednesday, 28th April, a small band of men was posted in one of the defiles leading from the sequestered Rora over the heights of Brouard into the valley of Lucerna. The narrowing crags

approached each other in the centre of the pass, so as to disclose only a strip of the deep blue sky of Italy, and the frowning rocks rose so abruptly that they denied foothold to the vagrant pine upon any stony ledge. The gorge itself was strewn with colossal fragments of limestone, the memorial of earth's travail when nature was being elaborated. Huge blocks torn from the dizzy height lay piled upon one another, some hanging in perilous uncertainty, as if they might fall at any moment, and yet the aged patriarch had, as a child, played under it a hundred years ago, regarding it with the same childish and mysterious dread as the sportive throng who clamber upon its sides to-day, and feel misgivings as to their venturesome presumption.

One ponderous mass lay aslant the narrow ravine and blocked up the pass, so that the path had been partially hollowed out under the giant buttress. About fifty

or sixty yards above this, the gorge widened, and several large boulders were scattered about, intersected by winding grassy paths. One of these fragments projected over the defile, and commanded the single outlet below, which we have described. Two or three mountain birches struggled for existence on its surface, while feathery heather, shading the underlying moss and lichen, alternated with bare patches of limestone. This bulwark seemed one which Nature herself had reared as a defence for her upland glens. The sun had risen, and the various glimpses of the valley of Lucerna, which could be seen between the chinks of the stones and trees, appeared bright in their variety of April colours. Among these upper rocks were scattered seventeen or eighteen men, of whom twelve were more or less armed, while the remainder had only slings. Two figures reclined upon that outpost, as if awaiting an enemy, and as the rock shelved inwards

they were not visible to any who might be ascending the pass. From his mien the elder of these was evidently the captain of the band. For some time he lay in silence as if engaged in prayer, his left hand toying with a sling, and his chin resting on the butt end of his musket. This musket, or rather culverin, was eight feet in length, the barrel being upwards of five feet, and it was so heavy that when we handled it in the Museum of La Tour, we were inclined to say, "There were giants in those days." There rests at this hour that antiquated weapon which once awoke these Alpine echoes as it dealt death and destruction among the Papal ranks. The leader's brow was shaded by thoughtfulness, but not by fear, for a smile of innocence enhanced his expression of courage. His eye was keen, as if lit with the flash of genius, and yet its calm lustre bespoke the simplicity of a childlike faith, and the tenderness of a woman's heart. He

was the lion and the lamb, the eagle and the dove, the warrior and the husband, the hero and the father. The one who lay near him appeared to be his son, from the general resemblance of his features to the elder.

“Ardoine, Ardoine,” murmured he to himself, as he convulsively grasped at the heather within his reach; “where art thou? Oh, didst thou know how truly my heart beats for thee! My memory is too faithful; I see thee again, and hear thy kind voice as thou didst minister to my aged grandfather. Oh, the past seems like a dream. Ardoine—dear Ardoine—God shield thee! I may never see thee any more. Ah! if that officer has betrayed thee, better that I meet him not. I have not heard of thee since that fatal night. My blood boils at the thought—I will revenge thee—and yet have I not my master to follow? Are we not taught to bear no malice even to our cruel persecutors, but only to stand on our defence. But

what if thou art now dead? If thou hast perished? Would that I could have died for thee, or shed my last drop of blood in thy defence!"

"Son," said Janavel, addressing Raynald, "you turn your face away from me as though you would conceal the trickling tear; you know that I have a father's heart, that yearns over you all, and weeps for our terrible bereavements."

"Oh, father, I am not ashamed of my tears, for they are not those of fear. I am ready to brave danger or death by your side, but the memories of the past overpowered my mind as I lay upon this stone, and I could not help thinking of my darling Ardoine. Oh, where is she? What has become of her? I shall never see her again! And my dear grandfather?"

"Hush, my boy, awake not the bitterness of sorrow, let us commend ourselves to God. Signal to my brave friends to fall on their knees."

The various members of the band in their respective places did so, while the leader stretching out his hands toward heaven and looking upwards, said in a clear and earnest voice :—

“God of our fathers, the God of battle, who savest not by the multitude of an host, defend us for thy name’s sake ; keep us steadfast in thy faith, and if we fall, receive our souls, through Christ Jesus.”

Honour to these heroes in action and suffering ! Great were they in their affliction, great in their moral heroism, great in their loyal patriotism ! Janavel stood in the gorge, a mighty man of valour, armed against thousands, representing, as in a figure, his own Church, so long the champion of truth and liberty against the hosts of Rome.

“Father,” added Raynald, after a pause, “methinks these rocks of Rummer will not be forgotten in our history. It was here that you routed the enemy four days ago, was it not ?”

“The Lord was with us, and gave us the victory ; even fulfilling the words of Joshua, ‘One man shall chase a thousand.’ I had only seven, and there must have been at least six hundred of our adversaries. As soon as the first handful had got through yonder opening, we each selected our man, and each bullet brought a corpse to the ground. You can see the traces of the blood there still, in that pool to the left. When we fought down hill, the stones of the slingers and the shots of the fusiliers really did more execution than you would have believed.”

“Oh, my father,” exclaimed the young man, looking at him with the glow of admiration ; “there are few like you, so good, so kind, and so brave.”

“Well, dear Raynald,” rejoined Jana-vel, with a transient smile, “I am glad that you have a son’s heart, but it may be your lot to eclipse your father at some future time.”

“No, father, to be your equal is more than I dare aspire to. But I will try to make the proverb true, ‘Like father, like son.’”

“Look,” continued Janavel, “how pleasant this gentle breeze is, as it gently moves the quivering leaves of the birch. You know what a lover of nature I am, and how I delight in these little daily commonplace occurrences to see the proofs of my heavenly Father’s love. The soft breeze in which those silvery leaves just tremble, and which cools our brow in the sultry sun, has a message of peace to one’s heart, and tells us that God is good, while those snowy peaks and these convulsed rocks around us tell us that He is great. But oh, how wonderful is his love ! Think of his Son taking our nature on Him, living as a man among men, suffering and dying for us, and all for our eternal salvation. Oh, Raynald, these are truths which reach the heart and make the living soul valiant for God.”

“I trust I feel the truth of what you say,” replied Raynald, “I do desire to enter into this delightful experience, of which I have had such blessed examples in dear Aunt Marie and my grandfather. I know it is not enough to belong to a primitive and apostolic Church unless one’s heart is right with God ; and I do feel that all our troubles have brought me nearer to my Saviour.”

“Cling to Him and all will be well. Let nothing induce you to abjure the faith of your fathers ; my son, look at the things which are not seen and are eternal ; count the cost, give up all for Christ now, and you will be a gainer to all eternity.”

“How different, father, are these cruel massacres to the untiring deeds of love which our Saviour did when He was on earth ! how mildly he reasoned even with his bitterest opponents. I am sure if we differ from the Roman Catholics in doctrine, we do not hate them ; but they seem to hate

us so because we are heretics. Father," continued Raynald, after a pause, "if we fight to-day, this will be the fourth day, won't it?"

"It will; on Saturday, as I told you, I repulsed the first band. On Easter Sunday, a battalion came against us under Count Christopher; I had only about eighteen men, and they lost upwards of fifty. Yesterday, at Pian Pra, we routed them when they were loaded with booty. Ah! those mercenaries can't fight as we do. Truth, liberty, home, all that men hold dear, nerve us, and these motives are stronger than fanaticism and self-interest; and if God be for us, who can be against us? Recollect Gideon and his fleece."

"I wonder," soliloquized Raynald, "whether the Marquis of Pianesse will send any more of his mercenaries against us to-day?"

"Raynald, your question is answered, I think. It appears as if a large body of

men were creeping up the spur of the hill. Quick ! warn our friends, and bid them be ready. Their leader appears to be Mario, Count de Bagnol. I can see a great number. There are three companies of regulars, some volunteers, and some of those foreigners, Irish I think, who they say are to have our valleys if we are turned out. O Lord ! look down upon us, for thine arm is not shortened, neither is it aught to thee to save by many or by few. Quick, friends, in your places. Keep yourselves close, and out of sight ; let each person allow his man to get well through that opening, and fire carefully. And be ready to meet them again, as occasion shall serve. Remember your wives and little ones in the hamlet above, and strike in the name of humanity and the God of Israel. They are coming, I hear their voices. Take them in order from right to left, as you are placed."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE THERMOPYLÆ OF THE WEST.

THE troops of the Count de Bagnol were slowly ascending the rough defile which led through the rocks of Rummer to the devoted hamlet of Rora.

“ O masthers, but it’s a powerful sthroke o’ business that we’re doin’ to-day,” said O’Donoghue ; “ we’ll have no need to warm our shins at our frind’s house, for it’s powerful hot in the sun ; it is.”

“ It is, avick,” replied O’Flanagan ; “ never fear, an’ jist let me have five or six digs at the miserable carkiss of a heretic to make up for the crack I got on my skull the other day.”

“ Ah, whist now, and how angrily our frinds are talking near us, an’ goin’ altogether on this frindly business. I ondherstand their prate purty well now. Let us make pace between them.”

“ An’ you always were good at larning,” replied O’Donoghue.

“ Not a bit of it ; tho’ I trace my gintle blood to the kings of Connaught, I niver was a dacent larnner ; only in our ould public I was sackretery, and wrote letters on love and marriage at sixpence a-pace for the young folk.”

“ Arrah, howld your rattle, listin an’ larn from hearing our frinds talk ; you can pick up somethin’ when you talk to your labourin’ min in your new farm here.”

“ These dogs,” exclaimed François Lemna, the speaker in the rank before, “ have had such a lesson down in the valley that I don’t think they’ll bark again.”

“ We have felt their teeth though,” rejoined Berru ; “ the wolves used to

devour the *barbets*, but now the *barbets* are slaying the wolves."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Lemna, "when we get to Rora we shall only find those that Pancalier loves to fight with."

"What do you mean?" angrily retorted the man to whom this was addressed.

"I mean a few old women and children."

"Coward!" said Pancalier, drawing his sword; "I'll make you eat your own words."

"Nay, nay, take it not so roughly. What were you doing at Villar? I saw you run through a poor old hag who was bent double, and carry a brat on your sword's point."

"Don't you talk, you liar, your helmet ought to be a nightcap; for all you're good for is to rush upstairs out of harm's way, and throw sick old men on to the floor, and then to spit them with your halbert. A fine fellow you are to talk! Besides, I

heard that you tasted some heretic flesh, *à la broche*, and that your stomach did not like it. You're no better than a cannibal."

"I wasn't the only one who did it. I do what I'm told in the name of the Holy Mother Church."

"Holy Mother Church! She should blush if you're her apostle. You'd care for your Holy Mother, if she didn't fill your belly and your purse too."

"Softly, Camerado. You know there's a full indulgence promised to all who engage in this holy work. And as I grant I have a sin or two to blot out, I need it. Well, the Pope tells me to send these dogs of Satan home; so if I give a fellow a thrust in *tierce*, and send him a step beyond purgatory, it's all in the way of business and duty you see."

"A plenary indulgence is needed," sneered the other. "I never saw such a lot as these ragged fellows behind us, with their wild eyes and unbrushed hair."

“The baste’s talking about us,” soliloquized the Celt, “and the base foreigner talks as if he were as good as us.”

“What! Irish—I don’t know where they are from.”

“It’s a part of England,” replied Lemna; “a country separated from us by a river. I heard them say they had been playing the same game at home, and that they had been turned out to find more work.”

“What was it they did? Anything in our line?”

“Oh, I suppose the same style of thing as this, giving the heretics a dose of lead or steel—splendid tonics for heretics.”

“They seem well up to the game; I pity the fellow that meets them, and can’t halloa out ‘*Ave Maria!*’ ”

“We needn’t find fault with them; they fight as if they fought for the fun of the thing; and they’re such saints. Why, bless you, man, they think as much of the Pope as if he were a God. It’s quite clear

they've not been to Rome. Look at that fellow with the scar down his cheek ; he got that last night in some scuffle as to whether Peter or Paul were the better swordsman."

"But apart from the great work we're doing for the next world, how do you find it pay ?" asked Lemna.

"Oh, it pays well ; good for soul and body. Why, when I fought against the Spaniards, you never got your beggarly pay. It was always four months behind ; but now the profession pays."

"And what do you put yourself down at now ?"

"I should say," continued Berru, dropping his voice, "that I've scraped good six hundred gold crowns since I have been working for our Lady in these valleys. I sent them to my wife last night, and bade her clear off my debts for masses for my mother's soul."

"That's not so much amiss ; it would buy you a comfortable den somewhere."

“I look to the main chance. What’s the use of making the daughter wince, when you can trip up the father, who’s got the purse under his vest? Well, what do you put your day’s earnings at, Master Ribaud?”

“Well, I should say a day under Pianesse is worth fifty scudi. I have not tried this fellow Bagnol, but I don’t think he’ll find us many fleeces on these rocks. Rora is a small place.”

“I say, captain,” shouted Lemna, addressing Pancalier, “You’ve the eye of a soldier. What do you say to that gorge and that narrow hole? There seems no other path.”

“It’s an ugly-looking place. If there was anybody in there before us——”

“Ay, a few fellows could give us something to do, if they got inside that breastwork of rock, and dodged among those stones. But it’s lucky for us that we’re early morning visitors; so we shall

find these dogs all snug in their kennels."

"It's an ugly place though, corporal. Why, ten of us can't march abreast there, and if there's a dozen fellows up there above, they'd pick us off like a crow on a sheep's back."

"Well, here goes," said Lemna; "come, let's walk well together. Have you got your muskets ready? I see nothing."

"But I heard some say," interposed Ribaud, "that it was here they got repulsed on Saturday; and you can see some fragments on the ground."

"Oh, niver mind, boys; think of the gals and the tin talents."

"Forward!" cried Pancalier; "you'll have some fun up here, what with fire and sword, and——" A well-directed bullet went crashing through the eye of the speaker, and scattered his brains upon his companions, whose fate was not long delayed. Lemna was shot through the chest;

Ribaud was struck in his right arm, and his musket falling to the ground, went off and shot Mandolin behind him. The avenue was blocked with ten or a dozen corpses, some of which fell upon O'Flanagan, who stumbled to the ground. Berru was shot through the throat, and lay gasping for breath, conscious that his end was at hand. A fierce glare passed over his face, as the death-rattle sounded in his throat, and the black blood gushed from his mouth.

“Holy Mother of God and the thrue Church!” said O'Flanagan, disengaging himself; “I always thought I was brave before, with the blood of the kings of Connaught in my veins; but I've no breath, and my heart's like a water-wheel on the Shannon river.”

At this moment a massive stone hurled from a sling struck the Celt in his mouth, and knocked him backwards, when he was soon trampled to death by those who kept pressing forwards.

“Fire again, my comrades,” cried Janavel, “and let each select his man. No bullet failed last time, I think.”

“Quick, father!” exclaimed Raynald, “they have divided. They have taken us in the rear. They have got round the mountain, and are between us and Rora.”

With the inspiration of genius Janavel promptly seized the clue.

“Forward! To the *broua*! To the summit! The victory is up there.” So saying, he suddenly retreated from the body under Mario, whom he had been keeping in check, and advanced against those who were deploying on the smooth brow of the hill above them. Janavel led his men promptly against the right wing of the detachment that was concentrating and manœuvring to surround them.

“Fire!” he cried in a voice of thunder, “Fire!” The rolling volley is heard, and numbers fall. “Down on your faces!” A storm of bullets whistle over the patriots.

They rise, they follow their leader, they change their direction. They shout their battle-cry, "*Viva Jesu Christo!*" They wheel to the left wing, which has been weakened, and, cutting their way through it with the sword, stand breathless on the *broua*.

"Place your backs to these rocks, my friends," cried Janavel, "and fire when the enemy comes well within range."

The soldiers came surging forwards; but their steps were checked at a certain point. There the leaden hail fell upon them, and sixty-five corpses were soon stretched upon the ground. A panic seized them. Some snatched up the wounded; some carried away the corpses of their comrades; others thought only of themselves. The enemy retreated down the opening of the valley, and the little band would have pursued them, had not their leader restrained them.

"Destroy them," cried he, "by intercepting them. Haste, take the short path

to Pierro Capello; we shall meet them there again." Flying from rock to rock, like winged insects from leaf to leaf, the brave men soon reached the place. The breathless troops were recovering themselves, when a storm of bullets and great masses of rock falling on them warned them that the victorious foe was near. They are seized by a second panic. The disbanded soldiers, losing all discipline, cast themselves into the woods. They fling themselves headlong over rocks; they are hurled over ravines and torrents. Many of them had brought ropes for the removal of their plunder; they tie them hastily to shrubs or trees, and slide down the rocks. As many as a hundred cling to one rope—it snaps, they are dashed into the river beneath, falling on one another, and mutually drowning each other in their mad efforts at self-preservation.

The waterfall sounds amid the glen and

the forest, in its thunders and rising foam referring man upwards to God, as it rings against the fragments of rock at its base, which once formed part of the hurtling cliff above. The dashing glassy wave is convulsively tossed over the crag, and rises again in shattered spray, changed, as it were, once more into the fairy silvery snow-flake, from whence it sprang in the higher Alps.

The sunbeams play upon the shivered mist, and inwreath it with the colours of heaven. The bright and dewy iris wears its steady hues above the elemental war, "like Hope upon a death-bed, or Love watching Madness with unalterable mien."

But mark ! The course of the stream is turned aside. The bodies of the slain and of the living mingle in the pool above. Now they come jostling over the crag, hurled downwards by the volleying mass. They sink, they rise, they move in the circling eddies that edge the base of the cataract,

and then drift slowly downwards loosened from time to time by a recurring tidal wave which releases them from some rock which has arrested their progress.

The Count de Bagnol fell into a hole, and was nearly drowned. Wounded, bruised, dripping, without his military accoutrements, or even his hat or shoes, he was carried back to Lucerna, where he died shortly afterwards; crying out during his illness that he felt the fires of hell within him, on account of the temples, houses, and persons he had burnt in the valley of Lucerna.

“Back, Raynald,” cried the captain of the vineyards of Lucerna; “back to the *broua*, that we may give God the praise. Come, my friends, bend the knee again, after the battle, as before.”

“O God!” exclaimed the intrepid leader, “we bless Thee for having preserved us. Protect our people in these calamities, and increase our faith.” So saying, the



JANAVEL.—“ My friends, bend the knee, after the battle, as before.”

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whole band, with their heads uncovered, and still holding their muskets, repeated the Lord's Prayer.

Blessed prayer, sublimely simple, yet sublimely grand, which has been repeated by so many millions since first it was uttered by a solitary Teacher on the mountains of Galilee; how didst thou sound from the mouths of these heroes steeped with the energies of their souls, wafted upwards by the winds of heaven, amid these fastnesses of the Alps!

Rising, the band repeated the Apostle's Creed.

"Well, Raynald, this is the fourth time the Lord has given us the victory against foes a hundred-fold more than ourselves; well may we say, Not unto us, but unto his name be the praise."

The same calm glance of innocence and courage glistened in the eye of the victor, as when he watched the murderous host defiling through the rocks. The same lofty

serenity, the same winning simplicity, the same eagle-eyed glance of heroism and patriotic valour.

“Child,” said Janavel to little Etienne, who had come to meet him, “run to your aunts and embrace them for me. We shall soon come back. Bid them not fear, but be ready to welcome us, and to prepare refreshment for my brave countrymen.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TEN THOUSAND.

THE missionaries of the Church of Rome have not yet fulfilled their holy crusade, and a mighty work remains to be accomplished. Accordingly, the Marquis of Pianesse has set all his forces in motion, and gathered together every disposable man. The glens of the southern lateral valleys of Lucerna are ringing with the sound of armed soldiers. The sun shines on helmets and cuirasses, on loaded arquebusses, flashing sabres, and flying banners; three thousand men are marching from Villar; four thousand are coming up the slopes from Lucerna, from the west, and

three thousand approach from the southwest from Bagnol. A common purpose animates these three companies, for they tend to a common centre. But it is difficult to conceive for what purpose ten thousand men have been gathered, or whither these armed battalions are bound, for they are marching into the heart of the mountain. The only small vestige of human habitation within the common area is the hamlet of Rora.

Surely it is impossible that these armed thousands, as they advance in battle array, are seeking that little village. Rora is a small mountain hamlet, consisting of twenty-five houses and a hundred and twenty inhabitants.

For what hath Pianesse mustered his ten thousand warriors? Is it to storm the unwall'd village of twenty-five houses? Is it to rout these mountain legions that those Irishmen are bracing their courage by such frequent recourse to those mysterious

flasks ? Is it at the thoughts of this village that those bronzed Piedmontese are turning pale ? Is it to storm this citadel that those French and Bavarian officers are encouraging their men ? It is a mighty force—mighty as the band of Greeks who fought their way from the plains of Babylonia to the shores of the Black Sea. Those ancient shades may now blush by the side of these modern heroes. Which is the forlorn hope ? Hath fame handed down the names of the generals of division ? Is the historian here with his notebook to chronicle the deeds of valour ? Where are the seventeen peasants these thousands seek, the twelve sons of the mountain armed with guns, and the five slingers of smooth stones ? Let the name of Pianesse descend to eternal obloquy : let the name of Janavel be frequent on the lips of the great, the good, the brave, and the free !

Ye everlasting Alps, upon whose slopes

these bloody contests took place in the name of religion, shroud your dazzling snows when your bases run with blood, and your streams are tinged with gore ! And thou sun ! let some intercepting cloud eclipse Rora, lest thy bright beams lighten it, and these deeds of darkness be seen by worlds beyond ! Rora ! at thy name let Rome grow pale, and let the sons of civil and religious liberty look towards this altar.

Gradually the three companies converge, and their courage rises as they mutually sight each other's banners.

They encompass the hamlet ! The massacre begins ! Shouts of "*Ammazzi*" rend the air, and the fierce shibboleth, "The mass or death !" echoes in that upland glen. The oaths of the soldiers, the screams of the women, the groans of the wounded, declare plainly that the ten thousand have conquered the hundred and twenty-six old men, women, and children.

Several members of the farm of La

Baudène had taken refuge at Rora, and among others the once blithe and light-hearted Lucille. In the early part of the struggle she received a bullet through her breast, but danger endued her with dying courage. "Janavel," she cried, "fear not—regard not me; be true to your faith, and God will defend the right!"

With these words she pressed her babe more closely to her breast and fell to the ground. The soldiers, as they rioted among the wreck, thought her dead, though in the licence of brutality they ran their swords through her once or twice. The little child was untouched, and still nestled in his mother's arms, drenched with her blood, vainly clamorous for the food she could no longer give, and sucking the breast which death had sealed.

Martha—who, after encountering many perils on the mountains, had only reached Rora just before the massacre—was, with two of her daughters, captured alive and

taken prisoner to Turin. One hundred and twenty-six bodies lie scattered about, while troops of maddened men ransack the slain or inflict further mutilation on the corpses. But hark! a familiar sound is heard in the distance. The evening mist steals up the hill sides, and nature's pure dew, like tears from heaven, falls upon the grass stained with human blood. The bell of the Convent of La Tour has sounded. The one in Villar has responded, and the bells of the Catholic churches ring as if in mockery of those that are now silent. It is the evening hour; the vesper bell calls the soldiers of the Cross to the *Ave Maria*. These men with drawn swords in their hands bend their knees; with blood-stained fingers they clasp the image of the Virgin; they prostrate themselves amid the mutilated corpses of women and children! Amidst disjointed limbs and human fragments—amid shattered houses and smoking hearths — they worship a

woman whom they represent as the Queen of Heaven, the type of womanly tenderness, and in whose honour they have wrought their deeds of blood. The murderer, the torturer, the ravisher, the thief, the outlaw, bend the knee and bow the head, saying, "*Ave Maria, gratiæ plena, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nunc, et in hora mortis nostræ. Amen.*"

We look at this scene, and mourn for the crimes, the delusions, the contradictions of fallen and fanatic human nature.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE AVALANCHE.

THE twilight is stealing on, and night—earth's funeral—will soon end this day, one of the many hundred which are written with blood in Rome's Apostolic Calendar. A female, clasping a babe to her bosom, scales, with hurried steps, the precipices of the higher Alps, where the mountain goat must balance his steps. Fear lends her unnatural strength, and though she is faint and breathless she flags not in her dangerous path. She turns her head anxiously every now and then to look behind her to see whether her pursuer gains on her, and she breathes an inarticulate

prayer for deliverance and protection. At some little distance, treading in her steps, a tall, stalwart man, of foreign aspect, rushes madly after the fugitive. His complexion was brighter than that of the native peasant, and, though the sun of Italy had bronzed his face, it was only with an external tint. His matted hair, his wild eye, the cast of his features, pronounced him to be a true Celt. It was O'Donoghue, who, for the important services which he had rendered the Church in these holy massacres, had been made the proprietor of the farm of La Baudène. He had rioted on that hallowed spot with others of his countrymen, who, in their mad fury, had dipped their hands in the blood of the widow, and torn the limbs of the fatherless in pieces. But who could have recognized in that pale, anxious woman, who with bleeding feet leaps from crag to crag, Renée, one of the bright band of sisters—she who sang the plaintive hymn

of faith and love to the invalid — she who led the strain of devotion, when the patriarchal family bent the knee before their father's God? She flees; the ravager of her house would add to his crimes against that sisterhood. She flees over her native mountains with a speed and recklessness that were never known when any one chased the strayed one of the fold. Haste, haste, Renée, the pursuer gains ground!

She has now reached the higher Alps, and the cold wind which drives across the glaciers bids her hope that ere long she shall plant her foot where the spoiler cannot come. The ice may do what the rock will not. The distance between them is not great. O'Donoghue gains upon his victim. A fierce smile lights up his eye as he thinks that his prey is within his grasp. He stretches out his hand. He seizes her hair, which has become dishevelled, and flows loosely behind. He has caught her. No! she dashes forward regardless of pain, for there

is something she dreads more than death. He casts those auburn locks to the wind and presses forward; again he approaches; he grasps at her dress; he misses it; he stumbles and falls. He recovers himself, and pursues his victim again. He regains his ground, and all but clasps her. Her fate is sealed! What may be her experiences of degradation and cruelty? She may be taken back as a spoil to the very home of her childhood, and her dying wail ring where she chanted her hymn of praise before. Is there no deliverer? Alas! in these Alpine solitudes it is in vain to hope for a protector. Nature herself seems stern and cheerless, and to have endued herself with an aspect more calculated to repel than to attract. Her fate is sealed, and there is none to rescue.

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There is; there is God! There is He who laid the foundations of those eternal rocks; who weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance. Nature is his, the work of his hands, the agent of his will. Mark! There is a huge mass of snow poised on the crest of yon rock. It has long trembled on the balance, and has been laden with the fall of yesternight. The cries of the pursued and the shouts of the pursuer have vibrated in the thin atmosphere, and set the mighty mass in motion. The avalanche descends. The crystal mass, which in its atoms fell silently to the earth like the noiseless scatterings of an angel, now rolls headlong, snapping the pines that have outlived the blasts of years. It is the true type of beauty and power, of innocence shrouded in majesty. Harmless in its atoms, it is now a thunderbolt in the hand of Him who traces the lightning's flash. The evil and the good are entombed in one common grave. Let

the righteous rejoice, and the wicked tremble! To the one it is the herald of salvation, to the other the messenger of condemnation. A colossal barrier of snow is now reared where these human beings trod.

The chaste mother has found a grave in the stainless snow—worthy the majesty, the modesty, the royalty of nature.

The summer sun shines on the glistening mass, and as the days of June roll on, it gradually melts, and the green sward and freckled flower appear again. The mangled remains of human bodies are disclosed, and the trooping vultures hasten to their unexpected repast. After a time nothing save white bones remain to declare that human passions had driven human beings into these recesses of nature. They appear to be the bones of a woman, a child, and a man. They rock to and fro in the wind; they are silent; but their history is registered in the book of God's remembrance.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD.

FOR some days Ardoine remained in a state of mental delirium, verging on insanity. At one time she reviewed the happy family scenes of La Baudène; at another she narrated with painful precision the scenes of the chamber of the Inquisition. She accused herself of being the destroyer of Rodolphe and Echard; and when her reason returned, its last impression of hastening to Rora to obtain assistance for the prisoners was still fresh, and prompted her to immediate action. Vacca, who had treated her with the tenderness of a father, was unwilling that she should risk her

safety; but Ardoine would not be restrained, and to avoid delay secretly left her hiding-place early on the morning of April 29th. Being familiar with the paths of the valleys she soon threaded the intersecting tracks, and proceeded on the one leading to Rora. The mountain air revived her spirit as she stooped to refresh herself at the crystal streams which trickled at every turn, and often overflowed the path. She raised her heart to God in thankfulness for his goodness, but it was with mingled alarm, as she occasionally met with some military fragments which testified to past struggles; nevertheless, having heard nothing of the events of the last few days, she renewed her hopes of finding Janavel and Raynald.

At a certain bend in the road Castelluzzo became visible, and at its sight Ardoine experienced so great a shock that she clasped a pine trunk to prevent herself from falling. She looked in horror,

as if she expected to see some tragedy of blood carried out before her eyes; but there were no figures on that mountain headland, which stood forth in the rising sunshine, clear above an encompassing sea of morning mist. At length she attained the summit of the path on Monte Brouard, and looked towards the village of Rora, which was now open to her view. Hastening through the orchards, she approached the hamlet—all was silent—but the scene which burst upon her as she entered needed no interpreter. She had had misgivings from time to time as she advanced—no fitful song arose from the budding orchards; no peasants were to be seen labouring in their patches of meadow, which they had resolutely rescued from the domain of the barren mountain; the campanile of the church did not appear above the trees, and many well-known homes seemed blotted out from the scene. Ardoine had not, however, many moments for the

indulgence of her poignant grief, as the voice of an approaching man made her start, awaking as it did the memories of the gloomy convent. She recognized those rough tones chanting some snatches of the Psalms in Latin, occasionally varied by a stanza of a Bacchanalian chorus. What could she do? There was little time for reflection, or for elaborating any plan of escape. It would be the climax of misery to be seized by her pursuer, from whom a kindly Providence had twice rescued her. Alas! her means of flight and of concealment were cut off, for the houses were ruined and lay mingled in the general *débris*. She starts! the voice sounds behind that rock in the next bend of the path; he will turn the corner in a moment; she must act decisively, and trust to the intuitive promptings of a woman's nature. Casting herself upon the ground with a spasmodic shudder, she threw herself among the dead, and drawing one mangled

corpse over her, edged her way under the gloomy pile. The living lay hidden among the dead. The mutilated body of that old man, the bleeding form of the maiden, the headless remains of little children, rest upon one who is yet alive.

Ardoine heard again the voice of the man as he drew nearer, and felt that he was picking his steps among the adjoining dead.

“By Pope Boniface VIII., who instituted the first jubilee in 1300, when two priests stood day and night with rakes in their hands collecting the heaps of gold on the altar of St. Paul; and by Clement VI., who from every hundred years reduced it to every fifty years; and by Pope Sixtus V. who reduced it to every twenty-five, this scene here is fruit due to the last jubilee, 1650. This will be a year of jubilee to these valleys, but it will not be so to me unless I find her for whom I have risked so much. ‘Rora, father,’ were the words the soldier said he heard. True, that’s a few days

ago; and what with all this fighting she could hardly venture here. It seems folly searching for her, but I must make every effort, and if I can't find her I'd better wind up the account of my orphan institution at Pignerol. By Pope Boniface, the establisher of Papal Supremacy, in 606, some of these brats would have been better in my institution to be reared as Catholics, than breeding pestilence here for the new comers. But I hear steps—perhaps it may be another friend of the Marquis's to capture the poor Franciscan. I see nowhere to retreat to but this well. Ah! it is choked with bodies; I must get in, however, and draw the wooden cover over. By all the dead Popes, no one will look here for the living at all events."

Malvicino's voice ceased, and the awful silence which ensued awoke Ardoine to the horrors of her position. The cold drops out of the gaping wounds fell upon her, and stained her tresses. There was a

chink among the heap of slain through which the light of the sun penetrated at that moment. She involuntarily turned her eyes on the corpse that was lying near her, when she uttered a suppressed groan and fainted away. She was entombed among some of the loved members of the circle of La Baudène.

CHAPTER XXIX.

RORA.

THE peaks of the Alps, which overlook the fields of Rora, still point heavenwards; their glittering snows are types of purity and beauty as they shine in the morning or glow in the colour of the waning day; the dashing streamlet eddies in its wonted channel, and the breath of spring gently moves the crests of the pines as of yore—Nature is the same. To change her man is powerless, it is upon his brother that he wreaks his fell fury and power of desolation.

The site of Rora is overcast, but not with the mountain cloud, for the edges of

Monte Viso stand in sharp relief against the sky of France. It is the dense smoke of conflagration that hovers on the spot. Not one house now stands where the village of Rora lately rose. Smoking ruins on all sides attest where they once stood, while the wrecks of their contents are charred by the flame or trampled in the mire. The owners have perished on their own thresholds—one corpse is blackened by the flame, another is headless, limbs are strewn about, women are lying dead as they sank under the outrages of their destroyers; the glazed eye of the little child is turned upwards, and its film glistens in the sun. Death hath gotten him the victory—death, the apostle of liberty, truth, love, and eternal life! The very grass is clotted with gore, the stones of the brook are dyed, and the water in places has run with a discoloured tinge. In the night the wolves seek their spoil, and fight over a detached head, the features

of which in the morning can no longer be distinguished.

Reader, such literally was Rora after the Christian crusade of the Church of Rome; such was the scene which presented itself to Raynald when he came back to rescue, if possible, any wounded friends from the agonies of a lingering death. Carefully treading among the dead, he paused from time to time as he recognized some old acquaintance. Lifting off a heavy piece of wood, underneath which he perceived hair not unfamiliar to him, he was shocked to recognize his little brother Etienne. His arms had been hewn off, and the gash of the sword had rent his throat. Raynald's tears dropped upon the boy's face, and he paused awhile, as the little fellow's surprising memory, his artless ways, the passages of Scripture he used to repeat, were brought to his brother's recollection. Moving on with a saddened heart Raynald directed his steps to a small

knot of bodies which lay apart, when, at his approach, the vulture of the Alps slowly rose on majestic wing, and uttered over this carnival of death his startling, melancholy scream.

Raynald's progress was again arrested by finding the body of his Aunt Lucille. She lay with a calm expression of peace on her face, a contrast to the types of agony by which she was surrounded, and her arms still clasped a babe which nestled in her blood-stained bosom. Stooping down he found, to his surprise, that the child was still alive, and disengaging him from his dead mother's arms, he laid him on the sward. The infant smiled on Raynald, even as he would have done on the murderer himself; and Raynald, bending down, mournfully kissed the babe's forehead, after which his sorrow seemed suddenly absorbed in the feeling of indignation and rage that rolled over his soul.

In a more distant part of the scattered

hamlet was another searching among the dead, as if for some loved object. He comparatively overlooked the old and the young, and examined only the countenances of the maidens, as though he were seeking a sister. He turned over many corpses with a look of anxiety, which subsequently brightened into hope, as he did not recognize the object of his search.

“Perhaps she did not reach here,” soliloquized he; “I do not see her. Ah! I see some tresses of golden hair like hers; let me lift that body off; it is she—no, thank God it is not. But, yet, what is this? Alas! it is her scarf, I know it. Oh, Ardoine, hast thou perished? O God, what shall I say? Were it better to die here than on the rack in the dungeon?”

Raynald approached the place, and when he beheld Echard stooping among the dead, fury blazed within his breast. He remembered the delivery of Gastaldo's edict, and what Iolande had said about the capture

of Ardoine on the grave. This man had decoyed her away, and she had doubtless perished, for he had not heard of her since. It was he who had been present at Rodolphe's execution, and what was he now holding in his blood-stained hand? It was Ardoine's scarf. Did his eyes deceive him? No; here was the son of the Marquis of Pianesse, an officer in this army of murderous crusaders, wearing the very property of his adored and martyred cousin. Raynald determined to take vengeance on him, who had deprived him of the cherished object of his lifelong homage, who had presided at the massacre of his own relations, and was now looking for plunder amid this diabolic scene of death. But Raynald recoiled from murdering him in cold blood; he knew that their pastors had forbidden retaliation, and that it was the glory of their creed that under countless aggravated cruelties no bloody reprisals had stained their warfare, and that nothing

but urgent self-defence and the rights of conscience ever led them to wield arms against their lawful sovereign. Could he capture him, Raynald would reserve him for the judgment of Janavel and Léger ; and if condemned, his life would then be forfeited to corporate justice, and not to individual passion.

Goaded by his anguish, Raynald could restrain himself no longer :—

“Wretch !” cried he, advancing upon Echard, and brandishing his halbert, “do I find you here alone, insulting the dead ? Are your passions so base that the lust of plunder is added to the love of blood ? Where is Ardoine, whom you decoyed away and betrayed ? Is she alive, or has she perished ?”

“Raynald, Raynald,” cried Echard, rising hastily and drawing the sword which Mullenier had given him, “you mistake me. I did not betray her ; I have saved her life ; I love her too well to injure her.”

“You love her !” And can I believe in an honest love among the cruel mercenaries of Savoy ? Look at this scene, and behold the mercies of your Church, and say if love can dwell in any of those who have abetted such fiendish deeds. The love of the wolf to the lamb is a very pure love.”

“Raynald, judge not by appearances. When we met before in La Baudène you learned that I was her protector—true we met on the grave——.”

“Then Iolande was right,” violently interrupted Raynald. “Save not yourself by lying explanations to mask your cowardice ; the cruel are always cowards. Where, I ask, is Ardoine ? Was not that jewelled sword yours ? I have it ; I found it on the grave ; there, do you know it ? You may well tremble, lest I stain it with the blood of a traitor. Where is Ardoine ?”

“I know not ; I have not seen her ; I am seeking her myself.”

“You know not, and yet I see her

girdle in your hand? She must be near; she is here; perhaps she is among the dead, and her corpse one of these I see around me. Oh, Ardoine, Ardoine, are you here? If so, your avenger, or your betrayer, shall soon lie by your side."

"Raynald, if you would listen, I could——"

"Coward! are you afraid to fight? Liar! dare you not struggle with a peasant whom you despise? I doubt not you are a worthy captain of banditti and Irish cut-throats, and can lead a forlorn hope tricked in your glittering uniform! You can murder girls, but shrink from an encounter with one who is young and strong. There, I will throw away my halbert, which is longer than your sword, and dare you to do the same—you coward! fit for the bodyguard of the Pope."

Echard impulsively cast his sword upon the ground; but before he was aware, Raynald, with the agility of the moun-

taineer, sprang upon him, and threw him down among the dead. Echard, who had been bred in cities, was no match for the athletic peasant. The struggle of unaided nature was short, and though it might have fared ill with Raynald had the encounter been decided by the skill of the swordsman, the officer was but a child in the grasp of a giant, to whom fury and sorrow had lent unnatural strength. Placing his knee upon his captive's breast Raynald unloosed Echard's sash, and bound his hands together, rendering further resistance hopeless. The prisoner's feet were next secured by Raynald's leathern girdle.

"Raynald, Raynald," gasped Echard, "my curse be upon your head, if you shed innocent blood. I am a convert to your faith; I have not entrapped your cousin; I have saved her from danger, and when last I saw her——"

"Silence," cried Raynald, placing a gag in his mouth. Anxious though Ray-

nald was to glean any information about Ardoine, he nevertheless feared the dangerous proximity of any stray Piedmontese soldiers, who might be attracted to the place by Echard's shouts.

“What are lies to those who shed blood like water, and offer widow's tears as a sacrifice to God? You were seen with her; you met her on the grave; and you have confessed that you loved her. How could the son of the bloody Pianesse love a Waldensian peasant, save to her confusion?”

In the struggle Rodolphe's ring had fallen out of Echard's pocket. Raynald observed it lying on the ground, and on picking it up recognized the family heirloom. His face became purple with rage.

“The murderous villain! How could he have this relic if he had not slain my grandfather? I saw you on the crag, where I fear he perished. O God, what shall I say? and this,” continued Raynald, tearing Ardoine's scarf from Echard's grasp,

“is another remembrance of his wickedness and our sorrow ; I doubt not he has more plunder.”

So saying Raynald searched him again, and drew forth several packets, in which were bones and strips of parchment.

“The impostor,” muttered Raynald, “he would have had me believe that he was a convert to our faith, when he is full of the false relics of his own Church. *Pro conversione Hæreticorum*, indeed, yes, engrave it on the blade of the sword ; *Sancti Lucii Eremitæ—Sancti Anthonii Abbatis, Latte Della Madonna*. Accursed baubles ! Lying toys of children, perish ! Stay, ye would be too much honoured by being cast on this ground red with the blood of the saints. Ah ! my grandfather, your ring, stained it may be with your own blood, drives me to madness ! and thou, my beloved, my adored, my Ardoine, hast thou perished ?”

So saying he cast a look of fury on

Echard, as he dragged him from the place, and with difficulty maintained his resolve to reserve his prisoner for the calm judgment of his father Janavel and the Moderator Léger.

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Ardoine gradually recovered her consciousness after her first paroxysm of terror, and she heard the voices of the angry combatants. With quickened heart she listened as though her ears deceived her, for she fancied that she recognized the voice of Echard. She heard it again; it was his! Her first emotion was one of joy, for he was alive, and had not perished on the crag of Castelluzzo. The other voice was that of Raynald. Its tones were those of anger and fury, as if he were blinded by one of those uncontrollable storms of passion, which had occasionally overcome him in earlier life. A sound floated in the wind; it was her own name—Ardoine. Her friends were engaged in a deadly quarrel,

and one or other might imbrue his hand in his rival's blood; they might be the victims of fearful misunderstandings, of which she was probably the cause. The cold, clammy sweat of death settled upon her brow, and fell to the earth tinged with the blood of the slain. Raynald had not seen her since her capture by Malvicino on her mother's grave; he doubtless thought her dead, and was in ignorance of subsequent events. She attempted to rise, to rush between them and prevent bloodshed; but the corpses among which she had edged her way were too heavy for her, and she was unable, weak as she was with anxiety and fasting, to move the fearful incubus. Her efforts were unavailing, and the horror of despair vented itself in an agonizing and piercing scream. The sounds died away, the combatants retreated, one or other having proved the victor. Ardoine dared not conjecture the result, for the defeat or victory of either would cause a death-

pang to her heart. She interrogated her memory as to the tones she had heard, half hoping that she had been mistaken. But a woman's ears deceived her not—the word was Ardoine—the voice was Raynald's.

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Malvicino, in his hiding-place, heard that scream; and as soon as Raynald had removed his captive, he proceeded to the spot, confident that it was the voice of Ardoine. He lifted off some of the corpses and threw them on one side, casting the women and children one upon another, forming a second heap, within a few paces of the first. After lifting off several bodies he saw the gleam of golden hair beneath, and a fierce smile of joy crossed his dark features, as he felt assured at last of the realization of his hopes, for which he had laboured so long, and hazarded so much.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE ABBOT AND THE PRIOR.

“AND has the heretic captain escaped?” inquired Pianesse, of Rorengo, the day after the sack of Rora. “Did you deliver my message to him?”

“I did, my Lord, I read it to him word for word.”

“What did you read?”

“The letter you wrote to him. Shall I read it to you again, that you may feel sure your message was delivered?”—

“‘To Captain Janavel. Your wife and your daughters are in my hands; they were made prisoners at Rora; I exhort you for the last time to abjure your heresy,

which will be the only means of obtaining pardon for your rebellion against the authority of his Royal Highness, and of saving the lives of your wife and your daughters, who shall be burned alive if you do not submit : and if you persist in your obstinacy, without putting myself to the trouble of sending troops against you, I will set such a price upon your head, that were you the devil incarnate, you must certainly be brought to me dead or alive ; and if you fall into my hands alive, you may lay your accounts with it that there are no torments so cruel that they shall not be inflicted upon you. This warning is for your guidance—consider how you may turn it to your advantage.’ ”

“ And what was his answer ? ”

“ I have read it to you, my Lord.”

“ Well, read it again.”

“ ‘ There is no torment so cruel that I do not prefer it to the abjuring of my reli-

gion, and your threats, instead of turning me from it, confirm me in it all the more. As for my wife and my daughters, they know if they are dear to me. But God alone is Lord of their lives, and if you destroy their bodies God will save their souls. May He graciously receive these beloved souls, and likewise mine, if it so happen that I fall into your hands.' ”*

“The incarnate fiend! Give me a pen then, I'll put a price on his head. I've an edict all ready signed by Charles Emmanuel, and countersigned by Morozza. What shall we say his scalp is worth?”

“A hundred ducats, my Lord.”

“A hundred ducats? that's too little. We can afford to be liberal if the country pays. His Royal Highness won't mind a good *buonomano* in a case of this sort, say three hundred; and then there are one or two others—two hundred for Léger, three hundred on that fellow Jahier, and two

* Both these letters are historically genuine.

hundred for the five brothers of Pral. I will put three hundred on that wretch Echard, and on the traitor Malvicino. It would be a good thing if you could find your friend. I know you love your immaculate colleague," said the Marquis, with a satirical smile.

"I do," replied Rorengo, "as the devil loves holy water, but I am quite ready to turn his head into pocket money."

"The traitor has done us infinite mischief. Look at this swelling on my head, and my prisoner and my convert both gone through his treachery. Here, give me some ink, and I'll write something that will shock the nerves of that sharpshooter." So saying, the Marquis wrote:—

"Giosue Gianavello delle vigne, bando, confisca, tenaglie, morte e quarti, con esposizione della testa in luogo eminente."

"Will that do? Will you give it a line, Rorengo, in your historical memoirs?"

"I will, my Lord, there is no fear that

I shall omit your name. I'm afraid," continued Rorengo, after a pause, "that we have not quite destroyed this brood yet. Some of them have escaped us and got into Pragela, and Mazarin will not let us follow, and even his master, Louis XIV., seems to side with these heretics."

"The kingly thief has no conscience," replied Pianesse; "he would do whatever suited for the moment, but perhaps he'll improve some day, and leave the Catholic world a better example. He may change his tactics. But come, Prior Rorengo, won't you take an excursion on these mountains, and see if fortune favours you? You can have a handful of soldiers to save you from the *barbets* if you're afraid, and you can earn your prize money."

"Not much danger either from the wolves or the sheep now, under your paternal government, Marquis; but I will think upon your suggestion; for besides the higher motives, which urge me to active

zeal, signing certificates, and leading a sedentary life has made me a trifle more corpulent, and I need to keep the flesh under."

So saying, the Dominican wrapped his robe round his thin sepulchral frame, which appeared to have enjoyed a perpetual Lent since the day of his birth.

Shortly after this, Rorengo, having made arrangements for a few soldiers to meet him at Rora, started there alone across the mountains, to be an eye-witness of the triumphs of the Church before embalming them in a well-earned historic panegyric.

Having mounted over Pian Pra, Rorengo approached the hamlet of Rora, and was startled to observe some ecclesiastic apparently engaged in plundering the dead. He instantly recognized Malvicino, one of those whom he was seeking, and the price of whose head he eagerly coveted. Malvicino hearing his steps looked round, and, sorely disappointed, refrained from his intended capture of Ardoine.

“Malvicino,” cried Rorengo, approaching him, “you are my prisoner; I arrest you by order of the Marquis of Pianesse, and if you resist I shall order my soldiers, who are mounting the hill, to take you by force.”

“By the deposed Popes Gregory XII. and John XXIII., do you unfrock me so suddenly, and lay hands on your own cloth? Has the Marquis’s supper given him indigestion last night?”

“Hold, you are his prisoner; he has heard from the gaoler that it was through you that Echard escaped, and for this treachery the Church arrests you.”

“Ruin seize dependants,” growled Malvicino, aside, “I might have remembered that doors have ears. Nay, gently, Prior, you have not got me yet. Hands off, I say; let go my robe, or by the Immaculate Virgin I will add your bones to those I see bleaching yonder.”

“Hideous immaculate, you swear upon

what the Church has uttered no dogma. Are you immaculate yourself, or were you born in original sin?"

"How dare you, who are nothing more than a hooded Calvinist, or a wretched Jansenist, presume to arrest one who holds the Catholic faith respecting our Holy Lady?"

"I tell you it is not a dogma, and never was," retorted Rorengo; "none but the impious Franciscans teach it to curry favour with the ignorant."

"And what do the poor Dominicans do who were carried away out of the convent in the valley on the backs of the Vaudois women?"

Then did these two men eye each other on the field of the dead, a striking contrast in person as well as theology.

Rorengo was of a tall, lank, skeleton frame, with long black hair, dark eyes, and aquiline nose, while Malvicino differed strangely with his rival, being short, thick-set, of sensual aspect, having a broad mouth,

which grinned with fierce expression, and disclosed two rows of prominent tusks.

“Hands off, you sepulchre wire-worm, or I’ll send you back to the grave from which you seem to have been let out by accident. By all the rival Popes, I’ll now feed the ravens with you.”

“Nay, bull-dog Franciscan, where’s the girl you’ve stolen from the Marquis? Now that I’ve got you, I shall not let you go. You must come along as my prisoner, in the name of St. Dominic, or I shall be yours.”

With these words Rorengo sprang upon Malvicino, whilst he shouted at the top of his voice for his soldiers. But Malvicino was not disposed tamely to surrender, and grappling with Rorengo, seized him by the waist, and sought to hurl him to the ground. Rorengo with his right hand clutched his antagonist by the hair of his head, and with his left endeavoured to grasp his throat. The ecclesiastics are locked in each other’s gripe. They strain

with all their force, their eyes become bloodshot with fury, and their hair waves loosely in the breeze. The veins in their foreheads stand out in relief as their energies are expended in the deadly strife. At last they fall on the ground, and still clasping each other, roll over the prostrate corpses. Rorengo is uppermost, and has the victory. He seizes his crucifix and strikes his opponent with it on the mouth. Malvicino wrenches it from him, and coiling round his antagonist, drags him beneath. Their grasp for a moment relaxes, but it is only to acquire a fresh tenacity. Again the strain of the muscles indicates the fury of the contest, and the word "Immaculate" might be heard mingled with imprecations addressed to various types of Popes. The combatants approach the precipice, but they are not aware of the gulf beneath. They struggle on, drifting nearer and nearer to the dizzy crag, but hatred fires their souls, and they reckon not of the chasm. They roll

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on. They are on the edge. Malvicino is uppermost, and his eye perceives the abyss. Rorengo is beneath, ignorant that he lies by the side of what will prove his sepulchre. For a moment they tremble in the balance. Their fate is suddenly brought before them. With screams of agony they involuntarily release each other, in obedience to the instinct of self-preservation. It is too late. Two bodies are falling through the air. The Dominican is hurled against a rock. The Franciscan is dashed against his rival. The bodies rebound and descend into the abyss. Rorengo is caught by his neck in the fork of a tree upon a lower ledge, and his body is thrown backwards, suspended as in a vice. A spasm shoots through the frame till the last tremor gradually ceases, and the only movement is due to the mountain breezes. Malvicino rolled down the craggy slope until his body was thrown into the cleft of a projecting rock. It sank in the fissure, so that nothing could



“ Malvicino is uppermost and his eye perceives the abyss.”

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be seen of him at a distance except his arms. There he lay wounded, helpless, and alone. His face was turned upwards ; the blazing sun shone into his eyes by day, and the dews of evening steeped his face by night. Gradually he regained his consciousness, and notwithstanding his broken limbs, endeavoured to extricate himself. But he was held motionless. The gloomy night rolled on, and he felt the pangs of hunger. No comforter was near. His cheeks became hollow, and his eye dim. The agonies of thirst were soon added to those of hunger. His lips clave to his gums. Once he thought he heard the steps of some soldiers and essayed to cry out for assistance, but articulation failed. A passing shower refreshed him, and loosened his tongue, but it was too late. His cries could not have been heard beyond the limits of the rock in which he lay buried yet unburied, as in an unnatural tomb.

At length his dim eye discerns a speck

in the air against the blue sky, and a sepulchral cry is heard above. That point dilates. He perceives that it is the cursed bird of night. His heart throbs tumultuously, and a cold sweat gathers on his brow. Those keen eyes have seen him and mistaken him for carrion. The brute creation allots him to the dead. He would bid death welcome, but death comes not, and he is helpless alike to prolong or to abridge his life. The bird comes wheeling down, and with a fierce scream descends on to the face of the unhappy man. The distant spectator might now see an object on that lately bare crag. There is life there ! There is a bird ! He has found his prey. He moves his head as if his beak were devouring the slain.

The imprecation which the Abbot of Pignerol uttered against himself on Castelluzzo was relentlessly fulfilled.

CHAPTER XXXI.

JUSTICE AND MERCY.

RORA was again silent. The voices of the rival monks had died away, and Ardoine, owing to Malvicino's interrupted labours, was able to disengage herself from her fearful load.

As Ardoine was debating whither she should flee for protection, or where she should find the surviving members of her family, together with Raynald and Echard, a faint groan arrested her attention. Again she heard it more feebly than before, and looking in the direction whence it came, saw a sight which chilled her blood. The

unhappy Iolande lay among the slain, wounded and evidently at the point of death.

“Oh! have pity, have pity! save me from the soldiers, why should they hurt me? Oh save me from the Irishmen!” faintly gasped the dying girl.

“Iolande, Iolande,” exclaimed Ardoine, “is this you? Oh, Iolande! my heart bleeds to see you thus.”

“Who is that? Ardoine? O Heaven, I fall by a righteous retribution. I perish by the hands of my own people. My uncle’s soldiers have done this. I have found you loyal and honest. I have played a double part. I came among you as a spy to sow discord and doubt, and to lay snares for you.”

“Oh, Iolande! you are dying. What can I do for you? What can I get?”

“Nothing; I am dying. You have been true. Alas, I fell a victim to the fury of the Catholic soldiery. Oh that the Marchioness could have seen the terrible fate she was

preparing for me when she sent me on my mission to the valleys.”

“What Marchioness do you mean? I thought you said you knew nothing of the Marchioness of Pianesse.”

“So I did, but I deceived you. I meant it well, for the interests of Holy Mother Church. But oh! Ardoine, my strength fails me, death approaches. I am the cause of your misery. I have poisoned Raynald’s mind. I betrayed you. I told Malvicino of your meeting with Echard. Oh! breath—I am dying—I told Raynald that a young officer in the Duke’s service had decoyed you away for base purposes. He has never heard of you since, and he thinks my statement true. I felt affection for you once, but then I hated you when I thought Echard had seen you and loved you. Oh, quick, reconcile them to each other. Quick, I’m dying—forgive—forgive me—Echard—repeat one of your verses—May you be happy—There is no hope.”

With a convulsive sigh the spirit was separated from the body, and the mangled Iolande lay among the dead, the victim of the brutality of her uncle's soldiers and of the fiendish policy of her own Church.

Ardoine shuddered as she turned away from the unsightly corpse, and left the place uncertain whither to bend her steps. For some time she crouched among the trees to recover her strength, and then crept cautiously on in hopes of meeting with some friend. She is suddenly arrested by an object which she sees beneath her. It is the figure of a Franciscan monk. He is upon his back imprisoned in the fissure of a rock, and yet the quivering struggles of the body indicate that life lurks therein. The chasing colour of her cheeks declare that he is not unknown to her, and even that eye flashes for a moment with indignation, and a transient gleam of joy shoots across her face. It is but momentary. Sorrow and sympathy soon dim those eyes

at this spectacle of human misery. She quells her tumultuous feelings, murmuring, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you."

Uncertain what to do and whither to turn for protection, either as regarded herself or the wretched sufferer, Ardoine bethought her of Samuel Vacca. There was no more danger in seeking him at Villar than in remaining alone on the mountain exposed to the outrages of the wandering bandits. She reached Vacca in safety, and having explained her mission, he readily accompanied her to the spot. With some difficulty they scaled the rock on which Malvicino lay, and Vacca strove to wrench him out of the iron grasp of the remorseless granite.

"Daughter," said Vacca, "is there a stream near? His strength seems ebbing. We must remove him to my house, where I

will protect you until you can find some of your own friends. Alas! I mourn when I look around and see these deeds of blood. I am but one person; I will nevertheless contribute my mite, and vindicate our Church by one act of charity in the protection of this maiden."

"Daughter," continued he, when they reached Villar, "fulfil your office. You shall be safe here. I will bring you a light and some refreshment, and you shall be true to woman's mission in aiding me to minister to this wretched dying man."

Vacca returned with some food, and the light of his lantern was cast upon the face of the unconscious Abbot. Ardoine and Vacca involuntarily exchanged glances. Their cheeks were blanched, their tongues chained. They looked at Malvicino's face. They saw not his eyes, but their empty sockets! It was there that the raven had stood and made his feast!

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“Oh turn away from your false creed,” said Ardoine, as she ministered to Malvicino, “and look only to Jesus Christ. He is part of your religion as well as of ours. Your very crucifix speaks of Him, but we look to His merits alone, and add nothing to His finished work which would rob Him of his glory.”

“There is no hope,” said the dying Abbot. “I have been too great a sinner. I am approaching eternity, and these deeds of blood and rage in the name of a God of love appear dreadful. Oh! I feel the pangs of conscience. I have been a great sinner and a vile hypocrite.”

“But Jesus Christ is a great Saviour. Look at Paul who was a persecutor, and yet became a preacher of the gospel.”

“I never knew,” replied Malvicino, “that you read the Bible. You appear to talk well, and to know more than many of our doctors.”

“We are taught in the Word of God

from our youth, and when we take a personal interest in our religion, these glorious truths become as it were part of our very lives."

"Oh! how I wish," groaned the Franciscan, "that I could blot out the past! but it is too late—I am lost—I am lost!"

"Say not so. God can blot out as a thick cloud your sins. His salvation is free, full and perfect, and there is plenteous redemption for the very chief of sinners. Jesus died, and is now able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him."

"These things sound well, but they are mockery to a man like me. I can do no more good works. I cannot win heaven."

"No, no more can any of us. Our best actions are full of sin. Christ has won heaven for us by His perfect sacrifice on the cross, and we must receive it from Him. 'The wages of sin is death, but the

gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ.' ”

“ I try to believe what you say, but it seems to leave my mind the next moment, and I am full of despair.”

“ Think of the thief on the cross. You have read of him in your Bible, have you not ? for although yours is in Latin, still it is the same as ours. What a sinner he was ! no one would have thought that there was any hope for him a short time before ; and yet Christ said to him, ‘ To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.’ ”

“ O Ardoine, I have been a hypocrite and a wicked sinner. Can you forgive me ? ”

“ Yes, I forgive you now. You have suffered fearfully, and God commands us to forgive as we expect to be forgiven. Alas ! I feel crushed and heart-broken when I think of our ruined household where we once lived so happily. Now I am an orphan, and many of my dear aunts and cousins have perished in these dreadful massacres.

I feel at times as if I should lose my mind. O God, support me !”

“Is Janavel your father? and is not his wife called Martha?”

“He is my uncle, and Martha is my aunt.”

“Oh! can I see them? Fetch them before I die. I will speak. Gather round my bed Janavel, and Martha, and Echard. Oh! my strength fails. Hear the voice of the dying; your happiness depends on it. I have something to say. By Pope Celestin, I am sinking. Oh bring them to me! Seek them on the mountains, I will speak before I die. Water—water.—Bring them before it be too late.”

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE HILLS OF ANGROGNA.

THE month of May has nearly run its course, and the spring is lapsing into the maturer summer, for the woods have not now the freshened tint of early green. Upon a spur of one of the mountains of Angrogna, the patriot remnant of the Waldenses, under the leadership of Janavel and Jahier, had made good their position against the attacks of Pianesse's troops. A knot of them surrounded Janavel in earnest consultation, and listened with deference to their captain, who was the president of their deliberations.

"My brethren," gravely remarked Janavel, "we are loath to shed blood. Even under

provocation we have not allowed vindictive reprisals to stain our hands, but have been guided by the laws of self-defence. The course we now pursue must be dictated by public justice, and not by rash feeling. Echard is your prisoner, Raynald. What charges do you bring against him?"

"Do you not remember him, father? he is the one who delivered Gastaldo's edict in January, and ejected us from our farm."

"In doing that he might be only the messenger of his superior, and discharging a commission against which his own feelings revolted."

"His words of menace, even then, father, betrayed his hostile spirit. But this is a slight accusation. I charge him with being the murderer and betrayer of our beloved Ardoine. Oh, Ardoine! how can I calmly talk on such a subject? My blood boils, and my spirit is bowed. She has perished. She may have been tortured, or else she has been slain in the massacre.

Ardoine, I did love thee with a depth and purity that one feels but once in a lifetime."

"Hush, my son, my grief is also bitter, and my sympathy for you is deep; but then, private feelings must not warp our judgment in this solemn trial, nor wrongfully accuse this young man you name Echard, of being the murderer of Ardoine. What proofs have you of the charge?"

"Too many, father. I need not speak now of the edict, or of the suspicious part which I found him acting in Aunt Marie's room on the fatal 28th of January. I then learned from Iolande that he met Ardoine, who had gone to weep on her mother's grave. She had disappeared, and had not returned. In my agony we hastened to the place, and our worst fears were realized by discovering the marks of a struggle and this sword on the ground. I picked it up myself, and here it is. I can swear that the sword is his, for I saw it in his hand on January 25th, and again on January 28th. Besides, it

has such a peculiar hilt, that once seen it could never be mistaken.—There, father.”

“Wait, Raynald, let us hear him speak. Echard, did you meet Ardoine at the farm of La Baudène?”

“I met her once by accident.”

“Not by accident, father,” violently interrupted Raynald. “Is that your sword?”

“Raynald, restrain yourself,” interposed Janavel, in a tone of decision. “Show the prisoner the sword. Is that yours?”

“It is my sword,” said Echard, “but I am guiltless. I would not hurt a hair of her head. Yea, I have risked my life to save hers.”

“This is your sword; how then did Raynald find it on that spot if you had not been there?”

“I met her there once by accident, but how the sword got there the second time I cannot explain.”

“Oh, listen,” exclaimed Raynald, frantically, “his sword condemns him. He

admits he was there once. She was decoyed away then, and has never since been heard of. We know that lies are part of the Catholic practice if not of their creed. Oh, Ardoine, my adored, whom I have loved from infancy, thou hast perished, and I restrain myself in the presence of thy betrayer and murderer. If not vengeance, father, justice! I demand justice."

"What else hast thou in proof of his guilt?" calmly asked Janavel.

"He presided at my grandfather's execution. I pointed him out to you, father, on the crags of Castelluzzo, and here is my grandfather's ring stained with blood which I found upon him, besides some trinkets belonging to other members of our family. From the first he has been our persecutor and destroyer."

"But to return to the disappearance of our beloved Ardoine. What makes you associate him with it?"

"You know where I captured him,

father, it was at Rora, gloating over that awful scene of carnage and blood. Is not that of itself enough to condemn him? In the blood of how many of our own relations may he not have imbrued his hands. He was there rifling the dead, and in his hand was Ardoine's sash. Ask him how he got that, father."

"I picked it up on that dreadful scene of death and destruction," said Echard, "and was both surprised and horrified myself to find it there."

"How easy it is to invent excuses," added Raynald bitterly, "and to give plausible reasons why things could not have been otherwise!"

"Has he had any opportunity of giving an explanation?" asked Janavel.

"Father, he is a perjured liar. He represented himself as a convert to our faith, and look what I found on him. These images and relics, and these parchments—*Pro conversione Hæreticorum*. And what

have we to set against all this weight of circumstantial evidence but his word ; what, I ask, are oaths to those who can imbrue their hands with the blood of heretics, and torture those whose only crime is difference of opinion ? Justice, father. We are fighting now against the troops of Savoy for our very lives, and how can we release this man—one who has seen our camp, who knows our numbers, and whose hands are red with the blood of those dearest to us ?”

“We have not stained our cause with reprisals,” continued Janavel, “nor would we put him to death from the desire of vengeance, but our position is perilous. Our blood cries to heaven, yet One reigneth there who has said, ‘Vengeance is mine.’”

“Father,” cried Raynald, “are you a man ? Did you see Rora ? Did it not make your blood boil ? Remember my mother—is she not a prisoner ? and two of your daughters—they may have perished

by the hand of the executioner, and you may be now a widower and I motherless."

"Search him," said Janavel, after a pause. "Ha! what is this? A certificate of recantation signed by Fra Prospero—and whose name? Why, it is the name of my brother Jean. Impossible! Jean, thou could'st not have been an apostate. Young man, can you explain this?"

"I know not how it came into my possession," replied Echard, "unless it was given me when it was my painful duty to be present at the martyrdom of one of that sainted band of six sisters."

"One of the six sisters! Did she perish on the rack, and you saw her?"

"I was on duty, and could not help it. Her name was Marguerite."

"Enough," said Janavel; "your testimony, Raynald, is borne out by his own confession. He did meet Ardoine, since which time she has not been seen nor heard

of. This jewelled sword was found by you on the very spot where he admits that he met Ardoine. Her sash was also found upon him. He has this certificate of Jean's apostacy, but which I feel sure is a base fabrication. He has my dear father's very ring, which was to have come down to me as an heir-loom. His explanations condemn him. Our position and circumstances must plead for us if we are severe, and we must pray to God not to bring his blood upon our heads. Young man, you must die, but the manner of your death shall not disgrace your uniform, nor will any of those barbarous cruelties which you have practised on our wives and children be inflicted on you. Let me exhort you to make your peace with God, and look to the blood of that Saviour which is able to cleanse from all sin. Jahier, I leave the matter in your hands. Let not humanity be separated from justice. For myself, I know not why, this is one of the heaviest deeds of my

life. May the Lord send his angels and withhold our hands from shedding innocent blood, and keep us in the path of right and equity !”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE BLASTED PINE.

THE mountain brow glows in the radiance of the setting sun. The plains of Piedmont in the distance seem boundless in the hazy light, while the slopes of Lucerna and Angrogna are cast into relief, forming one of those glimpses of sunny Italy so enchanting to the wanderer from the north.

The vineyard is not untrodden, the chestnut is casting a thicker shade over its jutting roots, and the meadows look bright with the changeless, yet ever welcome green, blended with the more gorgeous hues of summer.

Near the edge of that mountain crag stands a blasted pine. Once a proud land-

mark of Nature's own rearing, its arrowy form shot upwards on this beetling ledge, but it has been scathed by the fire of heaven, and now rises the naked type of desolation, the emblem of death, in the midst of myriad forms of teeming life. It is now the sport of the relentless blast, as rushing down the gorge it shakes the stem, and seeks to complete the ruin which the lightning began. It stands alone, a plaintive wreck, stretching its skeleton arms and leafless branches towards heaven, as if mutely interceding for him who is bound beneath.

Echard opens his eyes, and looks upon the valley of Lucerna. How solemn it is when the young and strong are suddenly confronted with death, and look round upon the earth, dear to them from infancy, for the last time. He turned his eyes in the direction of La Baudène, for it was there that he had seen her whose image clung to him to the last. His eyes wandered to the convent of La Tour, and then to the heights of Castelluzzo,

on which he had well-nigh perished not many weeks before. His life might well seem forfeited, for dangers had encompassed him on every hand from supposed friend or foe. There was one who could have absolved him, but he had not seen her since they stood side by side on the slopes of the Vandalin, and he feared that she had perished in the sack of Rora. Welcome death, for it would be the means of their re-union, although it were inflicted by her own kindred. Echard lifted up his eyes to the west to behold the sun once more for the last time. A mass of banked and leaden clouds had covered it, as if Nature would not withhold her tribute of sympathy from him who was so suddenly deprived of the residue of his years. Yet his eye rested with relief on the background. In the shadowy distance rose Monte Viso, the monarch of this fragment of the Alps, its snowy pinnacles, a bright contrast to the sullen foreground, dipped in one of those streaming columns of

light which poured from behind the clouds from the otherwise invisible sun, proving its presence though its orb was hidden from the spectator. Nature was true to herself, full of her mystic homage to hope and faith, like a chaste priestess, ever modestly pointing away from herself to Him at whose feet she was a lowly worshipper.

The arrangements are completed, and a party of six are selected for the execution of the adjudged doom. Raynald advances towards him to bandage his eyes. In the conflicting emotions which possess his breast, he notices not that he has seized Ardoine's sash, which he places round the prisoner's brow. Echard has seen it, and he smiles, as if contact with anything which once belonged to Ardoine was precious even in the hour of death.

The two young men stood together, one bound to a tree under sentence of death, the other the avenger and the executioner of the sentence. They were

different to one another in costume and mien, the dress of the peasant and the manners of the mountaineer contrasting with the uniform of the officer whose bearing was that of one who had moved in camps and cities.

A strange expression flitted over Echard's face, and Raynald noticing a look which recalled his father to his mind, paused for a moment before he tied the bandage over the prisoner's eyes.

"Raynald," said Echard, "I forgive you. I am aware that appearances have combined against me, and that in the honesty of your heart you think me guilty. Thank God, I am not. You will know it one day, but I desire not to cast my blood on your head. I will die with the name of that Saviour on my lips to whom my beloved Ardoine taught me to look."

The sorrow which overspread Raynald's face was almost imperceptibly tinged with jealousy at this allusion, as it reminded him

of his life-long devotion, and of the cruel fate which had blasted his cherished hopes. His pity, however, vanished when he thought of Echard's treachery and hypocrisy. He retired about ten paces from the tree, and beckoned to his comrades to advance to the same place. They stand in line, and then fall on one knee.

The silence is breathless, the click of the triggers is heard. In that short moment the life and experiences of the sufferer are suddenly condensed. They present their muskets. Echard's pulse beats with fevered strokes, for he knows that his hour is come. His senses reel, and his spirit is almost drifted into the dreadful unknown.

A shrill scream pierces his ear and recalls him to life. A heart-rending cry is heard on that mountain brow. The voice of a woman cries "Raynald—Echard." Raynald looks round, he knows the voice, it fills him with transport, it instantaneously dispels a thousand sorrows. The breath-

less Ardoine throws herself between the prisoner and the presented muskets of the six peasants, of whom her cousin Raynald is chief.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

JOHN MILTON.

OUR scene changes, from sunny Italy to merry England, amid the beechen woods and open heaths of Buckinghamshire. The grand combinations of forest, rock, and water are no longer to be seen, but the pastoral beauty that surrounds the spectator assures him that green-wood England is an island garden, and that grassy dells and dynastic trees have their own peculiar charms. We stand on the upland common of Gerrard's Cross, distant about nine miles from Windsor Castle, and traversed by the main road from Oxford to London. Rows of magnificent elms interspersed with limes adorned its western end, while on other

sides it was surrounded by undulating woods, in which the shrill whirr of the pheasant, and the liquid notes of the nightingale, could be distinctly heard. The yellow gorse in the luxuriance of spring cast a burnished hue over the champaign, and seemed by its florid brilliancy to chide the languid heather, whose purple corollas would not tinge the scene until the autumnal sun had inspired their fragrance. On the spot where the magnificent monumental Church now rises, stood that type of English manhood, a vigorous oak. The minute plumule, whose frame the summer fly had once shaken to its centre, had swelled into the gnarled and knotted trunk exceeding in girth the compass of two men. Its trunk was partly hollow, and its twisted roots peered above ground. The boughs afforded a pleasant shade, fringed, as they were, with the uncurling leaf of spring, and gently swaying in the tempered breeze. Two men were reclining under its shade ; one of them

looked like a foreigner, his dark hair and complexion bespoke a southern sun, though his eye shone with the glow of freedom, and the mildness of religious feeling. The other was of a more solemn aspect, and the peculiar expression of his features indicated that he was blind.

“Friend Léger,” said the blind man to his companion, “this is a healthy air; our scenery is not so romantic as your alpine gorges, but England has its beauties.”

“Your air,” replied the other, “is fresh as if it breathed liberty, and how welcome must such associations be to one who is trampled in the dust for conscience sake!”

“Fear not, England will come to your aid—Protestant Europe shall awake. In March last you had the kind offices of Switzerland and Holland, and at this present time, the kings of France, Sweden and Denmark, the States General of the United Provinces, the Swiss Cantons, the Duke of Wirtemberg, the Elector Palatine, the

Landgrave of Hesse, are interested in your behalf. I have written several despatches on the subject, at the command of the Protector, who has acted like your personal friend in the matter. On the 29th of April the Swiss Cantons ordered a fast, and a collection to be made for you; which example England has followed. The cruelties you have related are, I should say, without parallel in ancient or modern history."

"I believe they are; they certainly equal anything on record, and are worthy the religion of Mahomet, but not that of Christ. Oh England! be true to thyself, and liberty shall be thine eternal birthright! This English oak, Mr. Milton, is a type of your country, and quite a sight for a foreigner."

"Have you looked at the trees, Moderator Léger, which lie, I believe, in that westerly direction? There is Bulstrode Park; you have no sight like that, even among your Alps."

"It certainly eclipses our chestnuts, and

I have been admiring its pastoral glades with the sheep mottling the green sward."

"That park," continued Milton, "has been as you see it for upwards of 600 years. England was then papist, while you in your valleys maintained the true and apostolic faith. Raynerius Sacco mentions you as existing before that period; the date of your 'noble Leçon' reaches back almost to the same time."

"I feel much gratified, Mr. Milton, at your knowledge of our history. On the Continent, we have the impression that you English are both proud and ignorant of what does not concern your own wealth."

"You wrong us," replied the blind man: "the jealousy of nations, who have neither our freedom nor power, makes them abuse us, and, I think, unjustly, considering that we are ready to act as the champions of civil and religious liberty through Europe. We have broken the bonds of Rome, which still enslave the nations, and 'our soul is

escaped, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler ; the snare is broken, and we are delivered.’”

“ But, remember,” said the Moderator, with conscious and becoming pride, “ remember that you are indebted to us for your emancipation from Papal thralldom. We led the way—we stood in the front rank, and against us the first thunderbolts of Rome were fulminated. The baying of the blood-hounds of the Inquisition was heard in our valleys before you knew its name. They hunted down some of our ancestors, and pursued others from glen to glen, and over rock and mountain, till they obliged them to take refuge in foreign countries. A few of these wanderers penetrated as far as Provence and Languedoc, and from them were descended the Albigenes, or heretics of Albi. The province of Guienne afforded shelter to the persecuted Albigenes. Guienne was then in your possession. From an English province our

doctrines found their way into England itself, and your Wickliffe preached nothing more than what had been advanced by the ministers of our valleys four hundred years before his time."

"Honour to whom honour is due. But the sun waxes hot, and Master Ellwood will be waiting for me; for he will not begin his repast till I come. My mind is rather tried, for I have been working at the 9th book of an epic poem I have been writing."

"Have you got any of the manuscript in your pocket, Mr. Milton," inquired Léger, "it would be so delightful to read it under this shade. I feel sure, from your conversation, that its allusions and fancies must charm an educated mind."

"Ah! you come from the land of Dante, Tasso, and Petrarch, and your flexible language suits a compliment, Mr. Moderator, better than our stubborn Saxon. I have been thinking over what you have been telling me of your sufferings," continued he,

“ and I feel an inspiration ; I think I could write a line or two which might enlist sympathy for your cause. Have you a pencil ? —This air is enough to inspire one ; it is so much better than I breathe in my quarters at Chalfont St. Giles, some four miles up that valley. Did I tell you that the Protector has ordered a general collection to be made for your people, and that this county of Buckingham, with its 180 parishes, has subscribed, I hear, £498 2s. 3d.?”

“ But you are forgetting your sonnet !”

“ Not altogether, I was rounding off the last line. I think I have it all now. Are you ready ? ”

The blind man then slowly repeated the following lines, which his companion wrote down from his dictation, in pencil :—

“ Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughter'd saints, whose bones
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold ;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipp'd stocks and stones,
Forget not : in thy book record their groans,
Who were thy sheep, and in thine ancient fold,

Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that roll'd
 Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
 The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
 To heaven. Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow
 O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
 The triple tyrant: that from these may grow
 A hundred fold, who having learn'd thy way,
 Early may fly the Babylonian woe."

"A grateful offering to your genius and your muse, Mr. Milton. The power of sad truth has elicited your sonnet, which shall not perish unsaid nor unsung. But I see some one approaching—a young man of a fresh, ruddy aspect, without a moustache."

"It will be Sir Samuel Morland."

"Good day, Mr. Milton," said Morland, as he approached them, "the Protector wants his secretary, as you know we have no Latin scholars at Westminster. It is rather a censure on us, as our critics say, that only one man in England can write Latin, and he a blind man. He wants you to indite a despatch to the Duke of Savoy, of which I am to be the bearer, relative to

those atrocious massacres. They make my very ears tingle, and I promise you that I will give His Royal Highness, Charles Emmanuel, and his mother, Christina, a lesson in plain republican oratory; they shall see that I am an Englishman and the spokesman of a nation of freemen, whose birthright is liberty. I will call things by their right names, and the prince's ears shall hear the truth for once, or this is not an oak," added he, as he thrust his stick against the tree. "But let us hasten, Mr. Milton; our presence is wanted, and our friend, Mr. Léger, can accompany us to protect his own interests."

CHAPTER XXXV.

OLIVER, PROTECTOR.

“COME, daughter Mary,” said the blind man, “have you finished that sentence? the Protector will be coming in shortly, and will expect to find it done.”

“You are so eloquent, father, when your heart is touched, and you go on so fast, that I cannot keep up with you. *Quot-quot Reformatam religionem colunt* are the last words.”

The door opened and in walked a man of a stern and rather repulsive aspect, dressed in the costume of a republican general.

“Have you finished your copy, Master

Milton, for I am impatient to read it?" he asked, tapping his high boots with his sword.

"As the Lord liveth the sword of the avenger shall be drawn. I will send a fleet over those Alps, if need be, to teach our brother of Savoy reason."

"My Lord," said Léger, "I heartily thank you for your sympathy. We have stated simple facts, many of which I myself have witnessed, and now I am an exile in a foreign land."

"Call not our land foreign. It is England's glory to afford a home and an asylum of freedom to the oppressed of Europe. For my part, I have done something to make the Protestant cause respected abroad, and on one or two occasions I have proved that the glorious watchword, '*civis Romanus sum*,' which should have restrained that rascally *Prætor Verres*, is not an empty boast. I was about to offer you a settlement in the neighbouring island

of Ireland. Those Celts are thorns in our eyes as the Jebusites were to David. I understand that the Duke of Savoy talks of allotting your valleys to the Irish whom I turned out of Ireland. So it will be an act of retributive justice to appropriate their lands. There are valleys and brooks of water, for it is a goodly land if the stalwart arm of the Saxon only plied it with his iron tool. I offer it to you, Moderator, on behalf of your churches."

"My Lord, your secretary, who is well read in ancient history, would give us many examples of the preciousness of a native soil to the bereaved and the oppressed. We have our Zion, our temple and our sacred shrine. I thank you for your offer, but we would rather let our last man perish in the defence of our valleys than become aliens on a foreign soil."

"Right, nature is strong," muttered the Protector to himself; "it is still true in more senses than one that the gleanings of

the grapes of Ephraim are better than the vintage of Abiezer. But now recite to us again, Signor Léger, what thou hast seen.—Thou hearest that, Secretary John,” exclaimed Cromwell, when Léger had finished; “does thy polished Latin embody all these turns of thought? Thou seest I need thy secretaryship when I send and fetch thee from Chalfont St. Giles. Here, Sir Samuel, you have a good voice; read this out, that I may hear if the sentences run. You will have to repeat its substance before long, so you can recite your lesson to your master first. I have ordered a collection to be made through the length and breadth of the land, and I am satisfied with the result. We have collected £38,241. 10s. 6d. I have sent a gratuity of £100 to those brave fellows, and I wish Captain Janavel to have £40. It were a blot on our generation to suffer the light of the gospel to be eclipsed in your valleys, where it has shone from ancient

times. Now let me hear, Secretary John, what you have written."

"Read out, Mary," said the old man, addressing his daughter.

After the preliminary cough the amanuensis began—

"Serenissime Princeps,——

"*Redditæ sunt nobis multis*——"

"Stay, that will do. It is enough for me to converse with those quibbling princes of Europe in Latin, which resists the twists of their modern diplomacy. But I will hear the translation in my own good Saxon, which suits the ears of a freeman and a Briton."

"Most Serene Prince,

"We have received letters from several places near your Dominions, whereby We are certified, that the subjects of your Royal Highness professing the Reformed Religion, have of late, by your express Order

and command, been required, under pain of death, and confiscation of their estates within three dayes after the publication of that Order, to depart from and abandon their houses, dwelling and possessions, except they would give assurance to relinquish their Religion and become Catholicks within twenty dayes; And that when they, in all humility, addressed themselves to your Royal Highness, petitioning a revocation of that Edict, and that being received to former favour, they might be restored to the liberty granted them by your most Serene Predecessors; yet part of your army fell upon them, most cruelly massacred many, imprisoned others, expelled the rest into desart places, and mountains covered with snow, where some hundreds of families are reduced to such extremity, that it's to be feared they will all miserably perish in a short time with hunger and cold. When an account of these things was brought to Us, truly We could not but be moved with

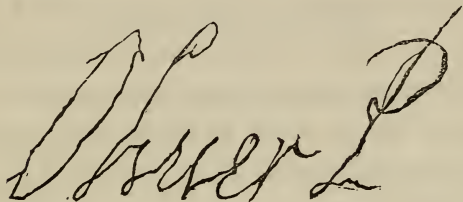
extreme sorrow and compassion, upon the news of so great a calamity befalln this most miserable people. And seeing We acknowledge that We are not onely in respect of humanity, but through communion of the same Religion, and so by a brotherly relation wholly conjoynd and concerned with them, We conceived that We could not either satisfie Our self, or answer Our duty towards God, or the bond of brotherly Love and Charity, or the Profession of the same Religion, if being touched with a sense of sorrow in this calamity, and misery of Our Brethren, We should not also use all Our endeavour, so far as in us lieth, to remove their so many unexpected miseries. Therefore, We, in the first place, most earnestly desire and entreat of your Highness, that you would be pleased to call to minde, and consider the Acts and Ordinances of your most Serene Predecessors, and the Liberty by them granted time out of minde, and confirmed to their subjects of the Valleys :

In the granting and confirming whereof, as they did that which questionless is of it self most pleasing to God, who intended that the Law and Liberty of Conscience should remain onely in his own power, so it is not to be doubted, but that they had also respect to the merits of their subjects, whom they had found valiant and most faithfull in War, and alwayes obedient in time of Peace: And as your Serene Highness hath exactly followed the steps of your Ancestors, in all other things that have been both graciously and gloriously performed by them; so We beseech you again and again, that you would not depart from them in this, but that you would abrogate this Edict, or any other that hath been made for the disquieting of your subjects upon the account of the Reformed Religion; that you would restore them to their native habitations and estates; that you would confirm to them their ancient Rights and former Liberty; cause reparation to be made of damages, and take such order

that an end may be put to their vexations. Which, if your Royal Highness shall grant, you will do a thing acceptable to God, comfort and revive those miserable and distressed people, and give satisfaction and content to all your Neighbours professing the Reformed Religion, especially to Our self, who shall esteem your favour and clemency towards them as the effect and fruit of Our mediation; which will oblige Us to make all returns of good offices, and be a means not onely to lay a foundation of a good correspondency and friendship, but also to encrease it, between this Commonwealth and your Dominions. And this We promise Our self from your justice and clemency; Whereunto, We desire God to encline your heart and minde: and so We heartily pray, that He would confer on you and your people Peace and Truth, and prosperous successes in all your affairs.

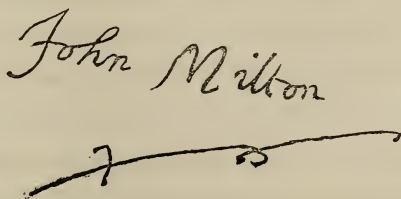
“Given at our Palace of Westminster.
25 May, 1655.”

“ Well ! that will do, put the duplicates in our state paper office. Give me the pen and ink, and England will sign.” So saying, he added to the document the character ;



“ There, that will do. Now, Milton, as you have composed it, endorse it with your signature ; I'll show you the place.”

The trembling hand of the blind man was guided to the spot, and his name in distinct characters was added to the scroll.



Cromwell sighed after he had heard the despatch, and said to himself, as he dried the signature, "It will throw a glory round us to rescue our sister Church, and bid her rise from the dust and put on more glorious apparel. Ah!" continued he, in a lower voice, "this little act may confer on me more lasting fame than many of my greater deeds, which posterity may impugn and misconstrue."

"Morland, you may leave for Turin, as soon as the ink is dry, and remember, that you are an Englishman and a Christian."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE ENGLISH AMBASSADOR.

RIVOLI is not far from Turin, on the main road which leads through Susa, and traverses the Alps by the pass of the Mount Cenis. The town lies in the fertile plain of Piedmont, beyond the last outlying undulation of those giant mountains, which however form a magnificent distant background, and can never be forgotten by any one who has surveyed the transcendent panorama from the heights of the Superga.

The court of Charles Emmanuel, the Duke of Savoy, was being held at this place in the summer of 1655, and considerable festivities had taken place to celebrate the

triumphs of the Church of Rome as achieved in the Piedmontese Easter. On one of the commencing days of June an audience had been demanded by a "Commissioner extraordinary," sent by the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England.

The Duke was seated on his throne in the reception room, and at his right hand sat Madame Royale, his mother; on his left was the Marquis of Pianesse, wearing a decoration which was not upon his breast in January. The Papal Delegate Gastaldo, Gibelino, the Archbishop of Turin, the Chancellor, the Duke's confessor, De la Ména, and most of the nobility who composed the Ducal Court, were present in their official capacity. A young foreigner with unblushing brow stood before the prince of the House of Savoy, his clustering hair, his fair complexion, his clear blue eye, bespoke his Anglo-Saxon origin, while his bearing was that of one charged with an important message, as the representative

of a great state. After bowing to the Duke, the youthful ambassador delivered himself as follows :—

“ May it please your Most Serene
and Royal Highness,

“ I am sent by the Most Serene Prince Oliver, Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland, unto your Royal Highness, whom he heartily saluteth, and with a very high and singular affection of minde towards the person of your Serene Highness, wisheth you life, a long reign, and prosperous successes in all your affairs, together with the love and affections of your people. And this respect doubtless is due to your merit, whether a man consider the most noble inclination and royal extraction of your Highness, together with the high expectation which the world hath from so many most eminent vertues, or whether by perusing the monuments of

Time past, he call to minde the ancient alliance of our Kings with the Royal family of Savoy. As for my self, though I be a young man, I confess, and have not much experience in affairs, yet it pleased my Most Serene and Most Gracious Master to send me, being one that is very much devoted to your Royal Highness, and a great lover of all the People of Italy, to negotiate even Matters of grand importance, for so those affairs are to be called, wherein the safety of many poor distressed people, and all their hope is comprehended; which indeed consisteth wholly in this, if so be that by all their loyalty, obedience, and most humble Petitions, they may be able to mollifie and appease the minde of your Royal Highness which hath been provoked against them. In behalf of these poor people, whose Cause truly, even Commise- tion it self may seem to make the more excusable, the Most Serene Protector of England is also become an Intercessor, and

he most earnestly entreateth and beseecheth your Royal Highness, that you would be pleased to extend your mercy to these your very poor subjects and most disconsolate outcasts; I mean those who, inhabiting beneath the Alps and certain Valleys under your dominion, are professors of the Protestant Religion. For he hath been informed (which no man can say was done by the will of your Highness) that part of those most miserable people have been cruelly massacred by your forces, part driven out by violence, and forced to leave their native habitations, and so without house and shelter, poor, and destitute of all relief, do wander up and down, with their wives and children, in craggy and uninhabited places, and mountains covered with snow. Now what, or what manner of cruelty have not those soldiers of late dared to act, or hath been omitted by them. Oh, the fired houses which are yet smoking, the torn limbs and ground defiled with blood! Virgins

* * * * *

and in that miserable manner breathed out their last. Some men an hundred years old, decrepit with age, and bed-ridden, have been burnt in their beds. Some infants have been dashed against the rocks, others their throats cut, whose brains have, with more than Cyclopean cruelty, been boiled and eaten by the murderers! What need I mention more, although I could reckon up very many cruelties of the like kind, if I were not astonished at the very thought of them.

“If all the Tyrants of all Times and Ages were alive again (which I would have spoken without any offence to your Highness, seeing we believe none of these things were done through any default of yours), certainly they would be ashamed when they should find that they had contrived nothing (in comparison with these actings) that might be reputed barbarous and inhumane.

In the mean time, the Angels are surprised with horreur ! men are amazed ! Heaven it self seems to be astonished with the cries of dying men, and the very earth to blush being discoloured with the gore bloud of so many innocent persons ! Do not, O Thou Most High God, do not Thou take that revenge which is due to so great wickednesses and horrible villanies ! Let thy bloud, O Christ, wash away this bloud !

“ But it is not my business to make a narrative of these things in order as they were done, or to insist any longer upon them ; and that which my Most Serene Master desireth of your Royal Highness you will better understand by his Own Letters, which Letters I am commanded with all observance and due respect to deliver to your Royal Highness ; to which if your Royal Highness shall (as we very much hope) be pleased to vouchsafe a speedy answer, you will thereby very highly oblige my Lord Protector, who hath laid this thing deeply to heart, and

the whole Commonwealth of England. You will also by an act of compassion, most worthy of your Royal Highness, restore life, safety, spirit, country, and estates, to many thousands of poor afflicted people who depend upon your pleasure, and me you will dismiss back to my native country with exceeding joy, and with a report of your eminent vertues, the most happy proclaimer of your Princely clemency, and one for ever most obliged to your Royal Highness."

When Mr. Morland had thus expressed himself to the Duke in the presence of Madame Royale and all the Court, he presented him with his Highness the Lord Protector's letter, a copy whereof has already been recorded.

He ceased. There was a pause. This speech, characterised by Puritan energy, pronounced with the manly assurance of youth and courage, and more like the severe accents of the prophets of old than the

studied phrases of diplomatic routine, produced a profound sensation.

The courtiers looked at one another, and the Marquis of Pianesse turned pale and sank upon his chair. The Duke blushed, bit his lips, but made no reply. Never had prince been so boldly found fault with to his face. At last the Duchess, whose mind had been moulded by the Jesuits, replied :—

“As on the one side I cannot but extremely applaud the singular charity and goodness of his Highness the Lord Protector towards our subjects, whose condition has been represented to him as so exceeding sad and lamentable, as I perceive by your discourse, so on the other side I cannot but extremely admire, that the malice of men should ever proceed so far, as to cloath such father-like and tender chastisements of our most rebellious and insolent subjects with so black and ugly a character, to render them thereby odious to all neighbouring Princes and States with whom we so much desire to keep a

good understanding and friendship, especially with so great and powerfull a Prince as his Highness the Lord Protector; and withall I do not doubt but that when he shall be particularly and clearly informed of the truth of all passages, he will be so fully satisfied with the Duke's proceedings that he will not give the least countenance to these our disobedient subjects. But, however, for his Highness' sake we will not onely freely pardon our rebellious subjects for those so hainous crimes which they had committed, but also will accord to them such privileges and graces, as could not but give the Lord Protector a sufficient evidence how great a respect we bear both to his Person and Mediation."

Morland bowed to Her Highness Madame Royale and replied:—

"May it then please your Royal Highness graciously to grant me two requests: To annul the decrees of outlawry against Léger and Janavel, on whose heads a price

has been set, and to restore the wife and daughters of Janavel who were taken prisoners at Rora."

"So gentle is our disposition," answered the Duchess, "and so lovingly do we feel to our misguided subjects, that we will at once grant your requests. I will sign an order for their release. Cardinal, will you hand me the great seal, and we will shew our Royal clemency without delay, that his Excellency may assure the Serene Protector of the earnestness of our intentions. Let his Excellency take this release to Turin himself, and be assured we will redress all rightful grievances."

After receiving the document, Sir Samuel Morland bowed to the Duke and the Duchess Christina, and retired, pleased with the first-fruits of his intrepid negotiations.

NOTE.—These and the following documents are historic, and given *verbatim*. Some of the originals exist in the State Paper Office, and others at Cambridge and Turin.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

LEGER.

IN the lowest dungeon of the prison in the Borgo St. Salvatio, languished Martha the wife of Janavel. She had been in close confinement since the beginning of May. Her cheeks were more hollow and sunken than before, and her pallid features presented a more striking contrast to the faded garment of mourning which she still wore. The past was imprinted upon her memory with a cruel distinctness which she could not efface. She wept when she recurred to her early grief. Then the happy retrospects of that sisterly fellowship was too faithfully re-pictured, causing a throb

of agony. The scenes in the convent, her unexpected release, her protection on Monte Vandalin, the sanguinary horrors of Rora, these thrilling episodes alternately soothed and intensified her sorrow. At Rora she had awaited death, but having been recognized as the wife of Janavel, she had been secured as a hostage in order to compel the submission of her husband. She remembered the fierceness with which Pianesse had received her, and how his eyes sparkled when he read out the letter which he sent to Janavel. She groaned when she thought of the sorrow it would cause him, but she prayed for him that his faith might not fail, and that he might not prove false to his conscience and his God, to save her from those who could only kill the body.

On the morning of the 7th of June, as she was indulging in these reflections, according to her wont, the door of her dungeon creaked upon its hinges, and Sir Samuel Morland, the English ambassador,

entered, holding a parchment in his hand, bearing the official seal of Savoy.

“Madame,” said he, addressing Martha, “I have heard in England, from our friend Léger, of you and your husband, and I have come to the court of Turin, in the name of England, to intercede on your behalf. Your release is the first-fruit of my mission, and I have obtained a repeal of the decrees against your husband and the Moderator Léger.”

“Thanks be unto God! He is one who hears prayer. O Lord, pardon my unbelief and my doubts! I longed to clasp my husband, and to rescue my daughters from this dreadful place. Oh, Janavel! shall we meet again? Courteous sir, excuse my wanderings. You behold me a wreck of suffering. The change from probable death to companionship with my beloved Janavel is almost too much, yet how many cruel memories will our re-union awaken.”

“I will give orders for your release and

that of your daughters. Our friend Léger will join us, and we will proceed immediately to these hallowed valleys which I long to see, as the classic ground of liberty and truth. But we will leave this place and go to La Croce Bianca, where I hope we shall meet with the Moderator and the French officer, Du Petit Bourg, who wished to communicate something relating to the late Easter tragedies.”

“Ah! Moderator,” said Morland, as he reached the spot, “we find you here. But I fear your head is no longer worth as much as when I met you with Master Milton on Gerrard’s Cross.”

“How so, Sir Samuel?” replied the Moderator with a smile.

“It was worth 200 ducats to the finder a short time ago, so that you carried some one’s fortune about with you, but I have got the Duchess graciously to reduce its value to a cipher, so you may lay it on your pillow to-night with the assurance that no

Papal felon will be able to clear off his debts at your expense. But come, forgive me if I presume to banter on what is a serious and personal matter. The fact is, I feel a gush of good spirits to think we have already effected something. But here is M. Du Petit Bourg; I believe he wishes to see us both."

"I salute you both," said Du Petit Bourg, "and especially his Excellency from the Court of England. You are perhaps not aware that the Court of Turin have published what they call a *Factum*, giving the account of the massacres, and they have quoted me in this paragraph, which I will now read out of the Court of Savoy's *Factum*."

"He who commanded the said Regiment was Mr. De Petitbourg, a professor of the pretended Reformed Religion, and he whom they call Ayde de Major, who caused all the Orders which were given him to be put in execution. Now the Marquess of

Pianezza gave command to him who was the chief and marched in the head of every Troop, recommending the same above all to the special care of the said M. de P. B., to treat those of Angrognia in the mildest manner they could possibly, as also to take up their quarters and provisions for subsistence in the higher parts of the valley, but peaceably and without the least act of hostility in case the peasants made no resistance.

“ ‘This Sieur de Petitbourg hath the reputation of a person of so much honour that there’s no question to be made but he will readily attest the truth thereof, and that he will never say he ever received any Orders to the contrary.’ ”

“ Now, in answer to this I have signed the following document, which has been duly attested by two of my late officers, and I shall commit it to your custody for future reference. In very truth I threw up my command rather than become an

executioner and assist in such execrable deeds, and the Court of Turin tries to deny and explain them away, owing to the excitement they have occasioned in Europe. I swear to you, Mr. Morland, on the honour of a soldier, that the current statements are in no wise exaggerated, for that would be impossible. I will now read you my attestation.”

“ ‘I Sieur du Petit Bourg, first Captain of the Regiment of Grancey, who also commanded the same, having received directions from Prince Thomas to go and join with the Marquess of Pionesse, and to receive his orders (which Marquess was then at La Torre), when I was just upon my departure, the Ambassadour sent for me, and desired me to speak to Mons. de Pionesse, and to use my endeavour to accommodate the troubles which were happened amongst those of the Religion in the Valleys of Piemont : in order whereunto, I then addressed myself to the said Marquess, intreating him, with much

earnestness, that he would give way ; that I might undertake the said accommodation, which I supposed I might have been able to effect. But he refused this my request, and that divers times, notwithstanding all the endeavours I could possible use to perswade him thereunto. And instead of the least mitigation of affairs, that this, or any other consideration which I could lay before him, did then produce, on the contrary, I was witness to many great violences and extreme cruelties exercised by the Bandets and souldiers of Piemont, upon all sorts of every age, sex, and condition whatsoever, whom myself saw massacred, dismembered, hanged up, burnt and ravished, together with many horrid confusions. And so far is it from truth that the whole was done by virtue of those Orders which were given out by me (as is falsly alleged in a certain relation printed in French and Italian), that I beheld the same with horror and regret. And Whereas it is said in the same relation, that the Marquess of Pionessa commanded

me to treat them peaceably without hostility, and in the best manner I could possible, the event clearly demonstrated, that the Orders he gave were altogether contrary, for as much as it is most certain, that without any distinction of those who resisted, from those who made no resistance, they were used with all sorts of inhumanity, their houses burnt, their goods plundered; and when prisoners were brought before the Marquess of Pionesse, I saw him give order to give them no quarter at all, because (said he) his Highness is resolved to have none of the Religion in any of his Dominions.

““And as for what he protests in the same Declaration, as namely, that there was no hurt done to any, except during the Fight, nor the least Outrage committed upon any person not fit to bear Arms. I do assert, and will maintain, that it is not so, as having seen with my eyes several men kill'd in cold blood, as also women, aged persons, and young children miserably murdered.

“‘As for the manner how they put themselves in possession of all the Valleys of Angrognia, to pillage and burn the same entirely, they did it with ease enough ; for (excepting six or seven who seeing there would be no Mercy shown them, made some shew of opposition) he sent them away without the least resistance ; the peasants thinking rather how to flie than to fight the Enemy. In sum, I deny absolutely and protest, as in the presence of God, that none of those cruelties above mentioned were executed by my Order, but on the contrary, seeing that I could not procure a remedy, I was constrained to retire and quit the conduct of the Regiment, for fear of being present at such wicked Actions. Done at Pignerol the 27 Novemb. 1655.

“ ‘DU PETIT BOURG.

“‘We, whose names are here subscribed, Captains of the Regiments of Infantry of Sault and Averne, do attest that we have seen the present Declaration made by the

Sieur du Petit Bourg, Captain of the Regiment of Infantry of Grancey, in the City of Pignerol, and by him written and signed with his own hand, in our presence.

“ ‘In Witness whereof, we have signed this present Attestation, at Pignerol, this 25 of Novemb. 1655.

“ ‘S. HILAIRE, Captain of Auvergne.

“ ‘DU FAURE, Captain of Sault.’ ”

Par moy ordonné au Containw Logant
En sa poen oir point y aperture de ses
Jo fu contrainct de voir estre de or
La conduite du reglement de peue
a de h man a aige aionis fait
ce vingt-lainet Jehan nobunbrun off

JACQUES BONNE

A Fac-simile of the Concluding Sentence of Du Petit Bourg's Attestation. Taken,
through the kindness of Henry Bradshaw, Esq., from the Original
MS. in the University Library, Cambridge.

“It is too true,” sighed Léger; “what have I not lost myself in these fearful massacres! My property, my church, and what I cannot replace, all my manuscripts and original documents which I had been collecting for years to write a history of our church. This Bible is the only relic I have saved from the wreck. Allow me, Mr. Morland, to testify as much in it, in your presence, as ambassador of that generous nation which takes such an interest in our persecuted valley.” Léger having written the following, handed it to Sir Samuel Morland:—

“This holy Bible is the only treasure which of all my goods I was able to rescue from the horrible massacres and unparalleled destructions which the court of Turin put in execution in the valleys of Piemont in 1655, and for this reason (besides that there are in it many small remarks in my own handwriting) I recommend and com-

mand my children to preserve it as a most valuable relic, and to transmit it from hand to hand to their posterity.

“JOHN LEGER, Pastor.”

“Now, Moderator Léger, let us hasten to the valleys ; you shall rejoin your friends and assure them of your safety.”

In a few hours Morland and his escort were on their way to the valley of Lucerna.

“I can hardly resist,” said Léger, as they were journeying together, “telling you an incident which happened to me in France. As I was returning from England through Burgundy I was followed by a spy from Turin. He caught me up at Mascon. I changed my horse, my wig, and shaved off my beard and moustache. Meeting him he informed me carefully about myself, to which I replied the man he sought was not far off. He happened to fall in that day with Mazarin’s regiment which was on the road, who stopped and beat him. In the

evening I heard of his adventures as I chanced to be at the same place, and the next morning seeing him in bed with his limbs broken, I asked him what he would give to find the man he was looking for, at the same time I took off my wig, saying, I am he. He recognized me at once, having seen me at Lucerna, and I then left the poor fellow in bed biting his nails with rage, as he saw me ride off."

"You certainly have seen something of life, Mr. Léger. At one time Moderator of your valleys, at another hunted as an assassin, with a price on your head, then an exile. May brighter days be in store for you, and may this treaty of Pignerol which I hope will be the result of my negotiations prove a benefit to you. Are we not approaching your valleys?"

"We are," replied Léger; "I see the well-known heights before us. I always feel the buoyancy of youth when I get inside our immemorial limits where my dear flock

is, and where my forefathers ministered before me."

"And there," said Morland, "are the valleys in which so many virtues stand contrasted with such black crimes. Have yon crags witnessed the deeds that made the heart of our country throb? have these echoes rung with the cries which have pierced Europe? and has yon bright glassy stream been dyed with the mother's blood? Every rock is eloquent of the past, every defile is a record of bravery and freedom. Thou valley of Lucerna, thou hast truly the beauties of nature, for this is a lovely view; but thou hast memories of history, truth, liberty, and religion. This gives thee a charm above the glacier or the waterfall; this gives to Monte Viso a glory beyond its rival Monte Rosa, and makes this narrowed Pelice more classic than the shores of the sunny Como. Moderator," continued Sir Samuel, turning to Léger, "on entering your valleys I am reminded of that

passage in Cicero about Athens: ‘*Movemur, nescio quo pacto, locis ipsis, in quibus eorum, quos admiramur, adsunt vestigia.*’ Are we not in the valleys? The Piedmontese soldiers appear to be quiet just now, but we are in no danger with my passports and official credentials. If any insult is offered to me, Oliver will give Charles Emmanuel something more than words next time. But look, what knot of men is that on yonder hill? They are not the Duke’s troops. They look like your peasants.”

“They do indeed,” replied Léger. “Look, Martha, at that group. It seems to me as if I recognized some of the figures.”

“Oh! it looks like my husband, and I believe that he is on the hills of Angrogna. I think it is he. What are they doing? Let us haste. There is Raynald. Something serious is taking place, for there is a figure tied to that blasted fir on the crag. It is some officer. Do my eyes deceive me? It is like that young man in whom I have felt

such a deep interest. Gracious Heaven ! it is he, the one who rescued me ! Let us haste ! What can Janavel and Raynald be doing ? There is another figure—a female. It is Ardoine. Oh ! I fear there is some misunderstanding. In the name of Heaven let us haste to them ere it be too late.”

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ARDOINE'S EXPLANATIONS.

“ Oh, stop,” cried Ardoine, in a tone of agony ; “ stop, uncle, for the love of God ! What is it you are doing ? Stop. I know that young man ; listen to me, I entreat you.”

The eyes of all were turned on Ardoine —her presence caused a thrill of joy to those who had not seen her since the mysterious meeting on Marie's grave, and her very presence was of itself a disproof of the main charge against the prisoner. Raynald's heart leaped with the throb of early love, and Janavel felt a heavy load removed from his mind.

“Ardoine, dearest,” exclaimed Raynald, “thank God ! you are alive ; we feared that you had perished, and that yon deceiver and murderer had allured you to destruction.”

“Oh, speak not thus, Raynald, you know him not—he is not a deceiver, he is my preserver. Oh, Echard—thank God—I am in time to save you.”

“Raynald, withdraw your men,” said Janavel. “Come here, Ardoine, and speak before us all. We have had many proofs brought before us, which led us to believe that yon Echard had taken an active part in the massacres in the valleys, had assisted at Father Rodolphe’s death, and decoyed you into the snare of the fowler. Your presence here gives us hope that we may have been mistaken ; can you tell us anything about him ?”

“I can, I can. Oh, listen to me, and release him, for he deserves your best thanks ; and yet, how nearly has he perished by your hands ! Thank God that I have come in

time, or I would have perished with him."

"Calm yourself, child," answered Janavel; "you know that no sudden vengeance prompt us to stern deeds—fear not for him, if you can prove your words. Raynald has informed us, on the authority of Iolande, who you know was in our household, that this young man, Echard, had an appointment with you; that he decoyed you away, since which time you had not been seen, and we feared that you were lost."

"Let me reply to your statements in order, Uncle Janavel. Iolande is now dead—she has perished at Rora, through the hands of those of her own creed, and of her uncle's soldiers. She confessed that she was the niece of the Marquis of Pianesse, that she was sent among us in the character of a spy, and that she designedly led Raynald to believe that Echard had carried me off, but it was Malvicino, the Abbot of Pignerol, who made me his prisoner."

“What then of your meeting?”

“The first meeting was accidental on my part. True, Echard rejoiced to meet me, and risked his life by warning us of the coming massacres, which he had learnt in the councils of Pianesse. We were to have met a second time, when he would have furnished me with the details and with the means of escape. Iolande betrayed us to Malvicino, who waylaid me and carried me off prisoner to the convent of La Tour, the horrors of which I dare not recite.”

“And how did you escape, my daughter?”

“Echard came to my rescue, how, I hardly know. The Marquis was compelling me to a hateful marriage. I had already given myself up for lost, when he appeared as my deliverer, and we escaped together to Angrogna's hill.”

“But do you know that he has articles of ours about him? How came they in his possession? But whom have we here? Why it is my wife Martha—she rushes to

us breathlessly. Oh, thank God, that I shall embrace her once more."

"Husband, husband, what are you doing? Save that young man! What fatal misunderstanding has arisen?"

"How, mother?" said Raynald: "do you know him as well as Ardoine; if so, the providence of God has kept us from shedding innocent blood."

"My beloved husband, I have been rescued from the gloomy prisons of Turin, and long to clasp you once more, but horror, lest you are shedding the blood of my preserver, overpowers my feelings. Know him? I have every reason to know him—it was he who saved me—he saved me twice."

"Saved you, as well as Ardoine!" asked Raynald. "I cannot comprehend how this man, who has appeared to be only a serpent and a thorn in our path, should have been such a benefactor both to you and Ardoine."

"Husband and son, listen to me," replied

Martha, as she glanced tenderly towards Echard. "I was captured and taken to the convent, and this young officer had charge of me. He was so appalled at the cruelties which he saw exercised on our beloved sister, Marguerite, that he was determined to rescue me from a similar fate; and he risked his very life in liberating me from my prison. Unfortunately I was taken prisoner again at Rora, before I had time to communicate to you any of my past experience."

"Dearest Marguerite and Madeleine—alas! and are they gone?" moaned Janavel. A solemn silence ensued, broken only by the suppressed sighs of the surviving relatives.

"It was then," interposed Echard, "that the certificate to which you alluded was put into my hand by the Jesuit De La Ména, and I believe that it is a forged document."

"Can any of you explain how these

various articles are in his possession, these relics, parchments, certificates ; with all these other emblems of Catholic superstition, besides some trinkets belonging to us ?”

“He took them from the soldier whom he shot on Angrogna’s hill,” continued Martha. “The man had robbed some of our relations, and was pursuing me ; then it was that he saved me a second time, and in his endeavours to recover the plunder, took these articles from the soldier, with which they had been furnished by the priests.”

“How comes it, then, that our beloved father’s ring is in his possession ?”

“I can explain it, I think,” said Ardoine. “I saw him a prisoner on Castelluzzo’s Hill ; he was tied back to back with dear grandfather, then he would probably have given him the ring : they were taken to the crag to be executed, while I left to bring you, uncle, to their rescue ; but the soldiers, who were coming to attack Rora, intercepted me and prevented my reaching you. Oh,

then it was," sobbed the afflicted girl, "that grandfather perished.—Oh, beloved grandfather, I could not help it—I would have risked my life for him. I could not save them! How Echard escaped I know not."

"Appearances were certainly strong against him, for, besides these other proofs, your girdle was found on him, which seemed to indicate that he knew where you were, and had made away with you."

"Ah! this girdle," exclaimed Ardoine, looking at it, "I must have dropped it at Rora. I heard Malvicino coming after me, and in my fright I had to take refuge where best I could;" and at these words she shuddered, and convulsively grasped the blasted fir to keep herself from falling. "I must have dropped it, and he found it when he came to search for me. Echard, am I right? Speak, in the sight of God, have I not told the truth?"

"You have, you have; you have nobly vindicated my true character, and I have

only to add that, taught from your lips, and from those of the good Patriarch and that esteemed lady, I am one in heart and creed with yourselves, and have long forsworn the Church of Rome."

"Friend," said the Moderator Léger, "it is enough; God's hand is here. The young man is cleared—let us open our hearts to him, and treat him as one of ourselves; let us thank God that no sudden vengeance led us to do what would have been a blot on our characters, and caused deep misery to our own hearts. Ah! thou withered tree," continued Léger, "stand there in thy solemn nakedness, a monument of God's providence; testifying that He before whom goeth a fire, and at whose breath coals of fire are kindled, counteth the hairs of our head, keepeth our souls in life, and suffereth not our feet to slip."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE.

“ARDOINE,” cried Raynald, “can this be so? Do you then love this stranger, whom you have known only a few months?”

“Raynald, my cousin, ask me not. I do feel gratitude to my deliverer.”

“Gratitude! would that were all! Oh, tell me, has he not that place in your affections which I have so long sought to win; but, alas, in vain?”

“Dearest Raynald, why enter upon what must be a painful subject? the heart, you know, is like the wind of heaven, its breathings are fetterless. I have loved you, but it is as a sister loves a brother, and as

a sister would I be loved by you. Oh, take not away from me your friendship."

"Ardoine, can you forget how we have grown up together from infancy—how hand in hand we have played under the old mulberry tree—how we sat upon our grandfather's knee, and our infant voices sang together our evening hymn?"

"Oh, why remind me of all this, dear Raynald? these memories must be painful to me, if they are painful to you."

"And then as a boy," continued he, not heeding her interruption, "were you not ever in my thoughts? Was it not for you I scaled the mountain heights to reach the bright blue flower, as a contrast to your hair? Did I not delight in watching my flock all day long, because the evening was before me when I should again see my cousin's face? Did I not value that lamb most upon which your hand had once rested? Did I not look towards our farm with subdued feelings of reverence, because I thought you were

there, and envied the very birds to whose songs you listened?"

"Oh, Raynald, stop, stop, I entreat you, my brother; urge me no further."

"My boyhood had its bright dreams; young minds cherish fairy hopes of the future, and you were the subject of mine. I loved you, and trusted that my love was returned. I could not draw fine distinctions as to where the love of the sister ends, and the more absorbing one begins."

"Raynald, your manly intrepidity, your generous impulses, your religious feeling, have ever commanded my warmest admiration; indeed, you have not a friend who has your interest more at heart than I have—I would serve you to the death, and I do love you tenderly as a sister; but the love of the heart is not mine to give, it is often given and taken with a secrecy which escapes the giver. Oh, then, I pray you, blame human nature rather than me."

"Dearest Ardoine," said the young

hero, bursting into tears, "is it so? Must I resign you? Must I tell this blighted heart that it loves in vain? Then let me not mar the lot of her I have dearly loved, but let me advance her happiness. Tell me, Ardoine, dost thou love this Echard, to whom fate seems to have given thee?"

"I do," said the maiden; "the unbidden yearnings of my soul cleave to him—my heart is his, and I cannot retract the gift."

"Then you shall be his. I will do what I can to make you happy. No shadow of me shall cross your path. I will resign you, though my heart be wrenched; I will yield you to the love and guardianship of another."

"Echard," said Raynald, approaching him, "dost thou love Ardoine?"

"Ask the desert if it drinks in the rain; the parched lip if it craves water; the flower if it turns to the light, or nature if it loves the sun. Let my actions declare that I have risked my life to protect and save her."

"Thou shalt hereafter be my friend,"

said Raynald, grasping his hand. "I have been the dupe of misleading circumstances. My cousin loves you, and that is a sufficient appeal to a heart that really desires her welfare. I have loved her from a child, and had hoped that this bright star would have shone on my path amidst our many trials ; but God's will be done !"

"Raynald, it rejoices me to hear you speak thus, and I shall hail your friendship as a precious boon."

"Echard, Providence has given her to you. You have, it appears, twice rescued her from danger and death, and now you owe your life to her providential interposition. Tell me, therefore, is your love pure and deep ; and will your first object in life be to secure her happiness ?"

"It will indeed. Our hearts have been knit in adversity, and the storm has ripened our love more than the sunshine."

"Tell me yet, Echard, art thou one with us in faith ? Dost thou accept the

teachings of our ancient and apostolic church, as founded upon the Word of God, so that thou mayest be one with her in spirit? without which, your marriage were but a half-hearted union."

"I am one with her in faith. When I first listened to her voice, preaching truth to me over her mother's grave, its accents sank deep within my heart; the words lodged there. Then in the silence of my dungeon I revolved what I had heard, the very texts on the walls were arrows to my conscience; the words on the mountain side were not all vainly spoken in air, nor the last solemn utterances that came from your grandfather's lips. All these weighed much with a heart that had long had its misgivings, as to words of peace being written in blood, or the happiness of souls being wrung out of the miseries of the body."

"Enough, Echard. Father Janavel, and Moderator Léger, you have heard what we have said. Ardoine, you promised your

mother on her death-bed that you would not wed a Roman Catholic; nor without the consent of Uncle Janavel and Barba Léger. It only remains for you to win their approbation."

"We discern the finger of God," answered Léger, "in these circumstances. If Echard be a convert to our faith, we receive him with open arms, and would not withhold our blessing from this union."

"Friends," added Echard, "that sainted patriarch, Rodolphe, who was martyred on Castelluzzo, gave me, together with his ring, his dying blessing and consent to my union with Ardoine, should the providence of God preserve my life; and this the Lord has done in his own unsearchable way."

"Enough. Take her, Echard," continued Raynald; "she shall be yours. She has exculpated you from all the charges that lowered against you—you have been her deliverer, and not her betrayer. I resign her, because I believe it is for her happiness,

and this is the true desire of the loving heart; —the love I vainly hoped to win has been freely given to you—give her yours in return—let your whole life and energies be devoted to her happiness, and in your bliss remember your friend Raynald.”

“Friends,” said Ardoine, addressing the group—“these circumstances have well nigh driven others from my memory; but I have come to summon you to the death-bed of the Abbot Malvicino, the confessor to the late Marchioness of Pianesse. He has something to declare in the presence of you all, whom he seemed to know, and mentioned by name. Delay not to come, for he says that his revelation is connected with our happiness. He is almost at the point of death. I left him at his urgent request to find you, as best I could, and to gather you round him to hear his dying words, which seem, in some mysterious manner, bound up with our welfare.”

CHAPTER XL.

THE DYING CONFESSION.

“COME round me,” said the sightless sufferer, addressing the group whom Ardoine had summoned to his presence. “Alas! I cannot see you. By Pope—who—tell me who is here?”

“They are all here for whom you sent. There is our Moderator Léger, Janavel, Martha, Ardoine, Echard, and Raynald.”

“I want to speak to you all before I die. I have done you a great wrong. My conscience racks me in the prospect of eternity. By Pope——but I must give up my vain boast in the Popes. You have told me, Ardoine, more of one whose name I have long had

on my lips, but of whose truth I knew nothing. Oh, tell me, is there forgiveness for such as I?"

"Yes," replied Léger, "Christ is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.' 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.' Have you never read over that passage in Latin in your monastery?"

"I don't know," said the dying man. "If I did, I did not understand what it meant. It seems to reach my conscience now, and has a light and power it never had before."

"Fear not. Look to Christ upon whose blood the Church is founded. He rejects none that come unto Him."

"But I have sinned awfully; yea, against you have I sinned, and before I die I would confess my crime and crave forgiveness. The kindness of this daughter has reached even my stony heart, and there is a secret within me. I will not let it.

die with me. Its disclosure will add to your happiness. Why should not my last act be one of human kindness, when there are so many of a hellish nature to stain the past?"

"Speak, unhappy man, speak," said Léger, "for we stand around your bed. Speak ere your voice fails. We are here, and the approach of death should make us ready to forgive. You will soon be before your Eternal Judge, and shall we guilty sinners withhold our forgiveness for your debt of the hundred pence?"

"Oh!" exclaimed the Abbot, as a quiver shot through his ghastly sockets, and an expression of despair clung to his face, "I feel as if the flames of hell were devouring me. What can allay them? Oh! in the name of mercy, what can quench them? Water, water, give a dying man a drop of water for the love of God."

"Here, drink," said Janavel; "now calm yourself, and declare your secret which

lies so heavily upon your soul. Speak ere death seals your lips."

"I do think there is religion on earth," gasped the sufferer, "but it is not amongst us. Our cruelties are to advance our sect and influence rather than the kingdom of heaven. Look at the constancy of these men, their patience, their virtue, and how they can return good for evil. Oh! is there forgiveness for such as I? *De profundis clamavi ad Dominum.*"

The Abbot then sank into a fit of unconsciousness, while the group stood in silence round the couch. It is solemn to mark the approach of death, but terrible when aggravated by the lash of conscience. For some time he showed no signs of life, and Léger and Janavel feared that this mysterious secret had perished for ever.

After a short interval Malvicino partially revived and convulsively exclaimed—

"Martha, Martha! art thou here? Take me by my hand that I may know it is thou."

“I am here, speak ere it be too late.”

“Thou hast sorrowed long, hast thou not?”

“I have. For twenty long years have I mourned as only nature has taught a mother’s heart to mourn.”

“And tell me further the cause of thy sorrow.”

“It was because my first-born, my bright boy, my treasure and joy was stolen from me. Not only did I lose my darling, dearer to me than life, but in a way more cruel than death. He was stolen from me to be brought up in that faith which I believe leads to perdition, and therefore I mourn not only over his absence, but over the ruin of his soul. Alas! he might hate his mother if he saw her; he may now be among her persecutors, holding in abhorrence what is dearest to his mother’s heart.”

“And can you recollect when you lost him?”

“The day, the hour, and every detail is

graven with the iron hand of sorrow. The memory of such grief is ever fresh, fresh as if it were of yesterday. It was at the farm of La Baudène, in October, just twenty years ago. The sun had set behind the Alps in one mass of gold. My little boy had pointed with his finger to the scene in childish glee, and held up his smiling face to be kissed. I lifted him in my arms, and looked with tears of joy into his sparkling eyes. I stroked his black hair. Alas!" said she, sighing deeply, "little did I know that it was for the last time, and that soon the tears of bitter sorrow would flow. I went into the house on some trifling errand. When I came back my darling was gone. I ran frantically about. I rushed into the woods. All I could discover were two retreating figures, apparently those of Romish priests, and from that hour I have never seen my darling. Oh! the agony of that moment, Janavel, when I clasped your hand and fell on your neck and wept. Two whole

nights did I spend on my knees without changing my raiment. As a mother I should have wept over his grave the tears which nature herself kindly prompted, but they are tears of blood over the sacrilege of his soul. Oh! is this outrage on the instincts of humanity an act of religion? Is it not a libel on the God of love? O God! have mercy on me and support me," added the bereaved mother, as she sank fainting on the floor. Echard involuntarily rushed forward, and catching her in his arms prevented her from falling. "Oh could I see him but once more I should die happier, and that would be one gleam of light in the midst of the fearful calamities which have overspread our homes and valleys."

"Woman," said the dying man, "God is greater than we think. Give God the glory. Look up; I was one of the two priests. I took your boy. I placed him for a short time in the institution at Pignerol for the reception of kidnapped children, and

then as the Marchioness of Pianesse had no son and wanted to adopt one, I gave him to her. Raise those eyes—Echard, come here—stand by yon woman. Martha, look at that face, hear that voice; does Nature plead for her own? Are her instincts true? Martha, there is your son. Echard, there is your mother.”

The fainting Martha revived, and the fond look of the mother beamed in her eye when she caught the tender glance of him who supported her and whose heart beat against her own. Let Nature now unravel the mystery. Let her be true to herself as she was in the case of her who pleaded before Solomon that he would spare the young child’s life. How great is Nature when her springs are touched! “Give her the child,” said the king, “and in nowise slay it. She is the mother thereof.”

Echard’s tones now speak like music in the mother’s ear, the flash of his eye strikes her very soul, the father shines forth

in the son. She was satisfied. It was her son. She had seen him. She was in his arms. She could lay her head on her dying pillow more tranquilly, for she had had this message from God assuring her that his providence had counted the steps of her son for whom she had so long wept and prayed.

Let the mother again clasp her first-born after the lapse of twenty years. Let the aching void be supplied as she is strained by those youthful arms.

“My son, my son,” she murmurs; “God has given me my son.”

After the transports of the mother had subsided, Father Janavel came forward and pressed his long-lost son to his bosom, and mingled his tears with those of his wife. Ardoine involuntarily shrank back, while her heart throbbed with the delightful news, and vented its feelings in thanksgiving to God.

“My brother!” said Raynald, “art

thou my brother? Horror seizes me when I think how nearly I have shed thy blood and been thine enemy. Thank God I have not added to the pangs of my mother's heart, but that we can have this ray of comfort in the midst of our afflictions. My brother, God had made me thy friend, but now thou art more. I need not give thee her whom thou lovest, I have done that already when I believed it was for her welfare, when I knew that thou wert true-hearted and a friend to her cause. But take her from me again. Receive her from your newly-found brother as a precious gift. No shadow of regret shall tinge the sacrifice. I see my dearest mother's happiness. Thou wilt cause a smile on that brow whereon I never yet saw one linger, and when the sorrows we have endured have become mellowed by time, then thy voice shall soothe her, and thy hand shall close her dying eye. Come, Ardoine, join hands again

with Echard, whom the voice of death has pronounced to be thine.”

The lovers strained each other in a fervid embrace, and with clasped hands knelt before Janavel and Martha to receive their parental blessing.

“Children,” said Léger, “be happy, for this our son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found. The Lord smile upon your future path. You have tasted bitterness in your youth; may you hereafter rejoice in the sunshine of the Lord’s countenance, and in your mutual affection find comfort during the remainder of your earthly pilgrimage.”

CHAPTER XLI.

ECHARD.

ECHARD stood for some time transfixed, as the changing thrilling scenes of the last few weeks flooded his memory. He felt a secret peace which he had never yet tasted, for he had found a mother's breast on which to lean; and although his love was given to Ardoine, still a mother was a priceless gift, for the pure instincts of sonship, recoiling upon themselves, had formed within his heart a melancholy void. Condemning, as he did, the cruelties of the Romish Church, he had been unconsciously yearning after his father's faith; and that Church, how had it injured him?—It had kidnapped him as

a boy, trampling upon the purest feelings of humanity; it had made the father the enemy of the son; the son, the desolation of his own home, and an assistant at the martyrdom of his kindred: these were the blasphemous deeds of that Church of human nature, which, nevertheless, outrages human nature, as well as things divine. As an avenger, he had stood with Gastaldo's edict on the threshold whereon his infant steps had tottered, and caused misery where he had once been a bond of love; but afterwards in the providence of God, he had learned truth from the lips of his own people. His mother, his grandfather, the tragic death of his aunt, the examination of his uncles, the conversation of Ardoine, had all deepened those convictions which made him renounce the Church which had stolen him, and return with heart and soul to the creed of his fathers. Echard stood gazing at Martha in silence, as his soul heaved with

these tumultuous memories. Thank God he had rescued his mother twice ! How due had been this homage of a strange heart, to one who had mourned him so long and so faithfully ! He had been tied back to back with his grandfather, and seen the old man martyred who had fondled him as a boy—yea, he had himself lately well nigh perished at his brother's hands, and before those eyes which had shed the ceaseless tear on his behalf. He could hardly help casting a look of horror at the dying Abbot, the cause of these sorrows. Malvicino, at least, had known the unhallowed combination, that the son was rending the hearts of his father and mother, for Echard had often remarked a malicious smile on his face, as if he remembered the secret, and gloated in his treachery to nature's most sacred ties.

Malvicino's strength was rapidly ebbing. The anxious expression of distress, which had been stamped upon his features, was

somewhat softened, and a more tranquil repose illuminated his dying eye.

“Speak to me of your religion—tell me more of Christ,” gasped the dying man—“where is your Pastor? You said you had forgiven me; can God forgive me?—The blood of—what is the text?—I forget!—my head reels—repeat it!”

“Look up to the Cross of Jesus Christ,” answered Léger, in a solemn voice. “His grace is so free, so full and so independent, that there is plenteous redemption for the chief of sinners. Remember the thief on the cross—wash thy soul in the blood of the Lamb, and we shall hereafter rejoice together at the King’s right hand.”

“Jesus, Jesus! Canst thou save even me?—the thief—on the cross—Saviour, Saviour—I will—Jesus.”

A livid hue overspreads his face. His ghastly sockets quiver—the death-rattle is heard in his throat—his hands are stretched out—a convulsive spasm strikes

his whole frame. The paroxysm dies away, and that sightless body is dust and ashes. May that guilty soul find acceptance, through Him whose name was last sounded in his ears, and who having earned the character of a Saviour, is glorified in saving the thief on the cross at the eleventh hour, and in saying, as the Sovereign of Grace, and the King of Glory, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

CHAPTER XLII.

THE FIFTEENTH OF JUNE.

(Abridged from Dr. Muston's "Israel of the Alps.")

IT was on the 27th of May that Janavel formed a junction with Captain Jahier. Their first exploit was the capture of St. Secondo, in which 800 Irish were slain, and 650 Piedmontese; while on their side the loss was only seven men. These almost incredible facts became well known, and the terror of Janavel and Jahier seized all the neighbouring towns. Telegraphic signals were arranged on the tops of the steeples to announce the coming of the small but intrepid band of Waldenses, who had taken up arms to resist extermination.

On the 2nd of June the two Captains attacked the enemy, who left 150 dead on the field of battle. The Vaudois lost one man. Their attempt to capture La Tour failed, but Crussol was laid under contribution.

On Friday, the 15th of June, the Marquis of Pianesse having called to active service all the troops of the district, made an attack on Janavel's band, in the centre of Angrogna. The troops advanced up the valleys, at the same time, from La Tour, St. John, Rocheplatte, and Pramol.

Pianesse's bands intended to attack the Vaudois simultaneously, but this could not be attained, owing to their different routes. The detachment which came by Rocheplatte gave the signal of attack some minutes too soon. Janavel had with him only 300 men, but he repulsed these first assailants before the troops of Pianesse could come up in their rear. In order to divide them he inclined towards the heights of Rochemanaut, when

suddenly he found himself opposed to the detachment which had come up by the Costières of St. John, and at the same time he saw the third detachment advancing from La Tour.

In this critical position, assailed on all sides, and lacking half his men, who were still in Pragela, the hero of Rora, with that quick confidence of judgment and energetic promptitude of execution which characterize great captains on the field of battle, fell back ere the battalion of Rocheplatte could rally on his flank, dashed into the midst of that which came from Pramol, cut it in two, passed through it, and, as he had formerly done with so much success at Rora, posted himself, with his men, on the summit of a hill. The four battalions of the enemy drew together at its base. Janavel was now shut in betwixt a precipice and an army ten times more numerous than his own. It was nine o'clock in the morning; in this position he held his ground until two o'clock

in the afternoon, then judging that his men had been sufficiently exposed in maintaining the conflict, without flinching, for five hours, and perceiving some signs of wavering among the ranks of the enemy, Janavel raised his arms towards heaven, crying, "It is in thy name, O God! Support and preserve us!" and then shouted to his men, "forward, my friends!" With pikes, swords, and balls, these courageous men rushed like an avalanche to the bottom of the hill with all the impetuosity of a valour too long restrained. Without awaiting their shock, the enemy attempted to spread themselves out in the plain, and recoiled before them. By this manœuvre, the Vaudois succeeded in breaking them, when disorder ensued. The 3000 men disbanded. The Vaudois killed more than 500, while they themselves had only one killed and two wounded. Having purged Angrogna, Janavel was retiring to his entrenchments, when Jahier arrived from Pragela. They descended like

a thunderbolt upon the army of Pianesse, which was routed a second time. The Vaudois killed more than 100 men ; but the death of Janavel had well nigh proved a greater calamity than a defeat ; for he was struck by a bullet which passed through his body, entering by the chest and coming out by the back. His mouth filled with blood, he lost consciousness, and was thought to be on the point of expiring. Providence was pleased, however, not to deprive the valleys of their intrepid defender, and after six weeks' suffering, he recovered. His last advice to Jahier had been not to attempt anything more that day ; but Jahier was led into an ambuscade, where he and all his soldiers, with the exception of one, were cut to pieces. The 15th of June was a fatal day ; for on it the Vaudois were deprived at once of Janavel and Jahier.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE COL DE LA CROIX.

“The Duke of Savoy hath for the cause of Religion driven out from their native country his subjects which inhabited the valleys of the Alps, men harmless and such as for many ages have been famous for their retaining of the more pure religion.”

[Extract from a letter from his Highness the Lord Protector to the King of Denmark, in favour of the poor Evangelical Churches of the Valleys of Piedmont, bearing date the 25th May, 1655.]

THE mountain breeze is keen upon the heights of the Col de la Croix, one of the Alpine passes from Italy into France. A heap of stones and a wooden cross mark the summit of the pass, towards which a small party of Waldensian mountaineers are slowly toiling.

“Courage, dearest mother,” exclaimed Raynald; “we are nearly on the ridge, and I see the heap of stones before me. Then you will be in the dominions of Louis XIV., a refuge which Mazarin has not denied us. I said I would see you safely into France, and then I will leave you to brother Echard’s protection, for I must return to keep our forces together and take my dear father’s place. I do hope that the patents of grace in this Treaty of Pignerol, which is contemplated, may end these troublous times. I will step back and see how my father bears the journey. I am afraid his wound will make it tedious, though I doubt not Echard and Ardoine have done all in their power to soothe the sufferer.”

“Echard,” whispered Ardoine, who followed Martha at a short distance, “I need not your help, for I am a mountaineer. Give your hand to your mother, let her rest on her newly-found son as she treads the last few paces of her beloved Italy.”

“Oh, Echard! in the midst of joy at having you near me, I cannot help grieving bitterly when I look around and think that these are all the relics of our once numerous and loving family. Oh, La Baudène! Home! Home! Sweeter than ever, we shall soon cease to tread the sacred soil of Italy, we shall be exiles in a strange land.”

“But it is for conscience’ sake, Ardoine,” said Echard; “God is our Father and heaven is our home. You have taken joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing that you have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Let us still endure, as seeing Him who is invisible.”

“What are you thinking of, dearest Echard?” asked Ardoine, after a pause.

“I was thinking, Ardoine, that your love and confidence is the brightest heritage I have on earth. Dearest, I would rather have you on the foreign soil of France than be without you and own all our valleys.”

“Oh, do not overvalue me! You will

soon find out all my shortcomings. But do not talk thus, for you know I cannot bear to be preferred to my people's happiness, and you are one of ourselves now."

"I am of what nation you are," rejoined the ex-officer. "Where thou goest I will go, and thy God shall be mine. I will live for you, and do all I can to soothe my mother's declining years. What a noble character my father is, and how rare it is to see the union of such qualities, such simplicity and piety with such intrepidity and military heroism."

"And, dear Raynald," said Ardoine, "let us not forget him. I must remember that he is more to me than a cousin, a brother in deed and in truth. Dear Raynald, I cannot look back upon our childish intimacy without a melting heart. I hope he will be happy. Perhaps he may yet find some one more worthy of him than I."

"He will never do that," rejoined Echard; "his true, honest, warm heart

had become absorbed in his devotion to you, and his memories will be faithful to his early hopes. But look," continued Echard, "my father is moving his hand, he wants us to stop."

"Children," said Janavel, in a voice feeble from weakness, "we are near the boundaries which divide Italy from France, let us pause upon our native soil and behold for the last time the beauties of our beloved valleys. Look," said the wounded man as his eye kindled with enthusiasm and patriotism, "look at those valleys lately red with blood and scorched by the flame. Behold, the distant fields are green. Nature hath triumphed over man, and covered our blood. She hath thrown the veil of purity over the stains cast on her."

The broken family paused and looked back in silence. The scene was one to stir the hearts of all. In the dim distance, where the thick columns of curling smoke were rising, was their ancestral home. It

was still a ruin, for the genial spring and summer had not erased all traces of devastation. The half cut down vine might be bursting into new life as a symbol of hope, but the charred wood, mingled with the foundation stones, still betrayed the ruthless ravages of January. The valley itself seemed as if it had been scorched in patches, though summer was thrusting itself around. The absence of houses and temples peering above the trees declared that the destroyer had been there, that the Pope of Rome had cursed the place, and that his Easter benediction had brought forth misery through the instrumentality of the Church herself.

There is a love of country in the breast of the virtuous. These exiles felt it as they wept on looking towards the east, and envied the eagle that roamed over their native vale and alighted on Angrogna's crag.

They are exiles. Foreigners have spoiled them, and the very valley has been given

to the Irish whose hands are red with their blood. They might have remained. Their home might be still standing. But they would have been apostates. They are exiles, but not apostates. An unsullied conscience is a good beyond all earthly dignities. Let them o'erleap the present, and hear the verdict of eternity on the conflict. A voice from heaven shall one day say that "they have well done that they have done for my Name's sake." Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads, and the reproach of their widowhood shall be remembered no more.

The sun is setting, and its waning radiance lingers around those intercepting peaks. The place whereon that remnant stands, as seen by a spectator from the valley beneath, glows with the crimsoned light, but the exiles know not that they stand girt with the sunlight as they leave their homes. The crags of Castelluzzo stand forth in dusky outline; the hills of Rora, full of tragic memories, break the horizon; the

distant plain of Piedmont has faded into one sea of mist; the rock of Barund is just discernible; the glimmer of the Pelice is seen threading the valleys; nature is shedding darkness over the earth, and wresting from the eyes of the exiles the scenes which cheer yet crush their hearts. The fugitives press on. The darkness gathers. The pale, half-formed crescent in the south lights them as they cross the snows of the higher Alps which lead to France. They are leaving the east and going to the west. Italy is left behind, and they stand on the soil of France.

* * * * *

“Receive my blessing, my boy,” said Janavel, clasping Raynald, “and let me hear of you—be careful of our brave men, and do no more than is necessary for self-defence. Treat Mullenier as a friend and brother. I trust His Royal Highness will soon bid us return to our own land, and admit that our allegiance is true to the house of

Savoy ; liberty of conscience only excepted.

“ My son, hear my last words :—

“ ‘ Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

“ ‘ By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.’ ”

The shadows of night deepen—one by one appear those pale mysteries of heaven, those starry outworks of infinity, those silent heralds of worlds beyond, leading towards eternity, bright interpreters of the consolation of the future, which present sorrows so often cloud in our suffering hearts. Look up, ye little band, read the scroll of heaven, and mark that sapphire empyrean as it glows with those lamps of immortality. They speak of God ; of his power and providence ; they tell you that there are mansions in the sky ; they teach you a lesson of faith, and

that you should distrust unaided sense. As those twinkling specks of light are central suns, so your present sorrows shall be changed into everlasting joy. Look up from the snow-clad Alps to the blazing heavens ; sufferers in ages past have read the writing and thanked God, and taken courage.

“ Look, Ardoine, at those bright stars,” said Echard ; “ what a magnificent sight ! I have often looked at them in sorrow and joy. I saw them from the Convent of La Tour, and they bade me hope ; I saw them when a prisoner on Castelluzzo’s crag, and you seemed lost to me for ever. Oh, they are bright teachers, and bid us cherish hopes of heaven amidst the sorrows of earth.”

“ Dear Etienne,” whispered Ardoine, “ I remember his little voice, and his hymn about the stars ; how he used to repeat the last verse with such an emphasis, as his eyes sparkled, and he moved his little hand :—

“ I wonder much, that eyes like mine
 Those starry worlds can see ;
 Great God ! it was thy power divine
 That made both them and me.’ ”

“ Poor boy,” sighed Ardoine, as she wiped away the falling tear, “ thou art gone, gone for ever. Dear Echard, keep the cold wind from that motherless babe whom Raynald so strangely rescued at Rora. Alas ! our only relic of our beloved Aunt Lucille ! ”

“ Oh, dear Ardoine, how delightful it is to hear you speak ! I trust we shall soon safely reach the Valley of Freyssinières, and that our good Moderator Léger will speedily unite our hands as well as our hearts.”

“ Our marriage,” replied Ardoine, “ will be like those dear grandfather used to talk of after the plague, rather a solemnity than a festival ; and may God’s blessing rest upon us ; as He has preserved us through

so many dangers, so may He shield us to the end."

"Providences, such as we have undergone," said Echard, "are inscrutable. I think they teach us clearly either that there must be no God, or that a future state of retribution is a peremptory necessity."

"I thank God," said Ardoine, "that it is the last of these conclusions that is our consolation. Our sufferings appear hard, but we must suspend our judgment, and not arraign 'Him who knoweth the end from the beginning, whose way is in the sea, and whose path is in the deep waters.' "

"His wisdom, doubtless, will be vindicated in the end," replied Echard, "and partial suffering often educes general good ; so that as far as we are concerned we must count it all joy to suffer shame for Christ's name, and to be exiled for conscience' sake. But father signals to us ; he would have us

bend the knee, now that we enter on a new soil, the soil of France.”

The exiles then knelt down, and as Janavel’s weak voice ascended to heaven, the sombre clouds broke and the pale light of the moon shed its lustre upon the remnant, upon Italy on the east, and France on the west.

Rome! look upon that small band of exiles, and acknowledge thy triumphs! they are “persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.” Thou hast cast them out, for they are of the ancient stock, of whom the world is not worthy. Thou hast caused one sister to perish on the rack, one in the dungeon, one in the sack of the mountain hamlet, one on the mountain; two brothers hast thou martyred in yonder convent, one now labours at the galleys in the distant south, some escaped thee by a timely death; and those fair children—where are they? Some have been kidnapped, and languish in the abbey at Pignerol, or in the dun-

geons of Turin; some have been transported to other lands; some, it may be, subserve the desires of some Catholic lord, or cowed hypocrite; others have perished from cold and hunger on these mountains; where they once rambled for the flower, there have their members been strewed, and the highways garnished with their quivering limbs.

Behold, thy triumphs!—are these the proofs of the apostolicity of thy creed, or wilt thou people heaven with ransomed sinners, when thou makest the homes of them that dwell among their own people, like charnel-houses on earth?

Reader, our romance adheres in its main features to history. Numbers are fearfully expressive, but still they are cold appeals to the intellect; the solitary type makes a more powerful appeal to the centre of feeling and the spring of action—the heart. Multiply this monograph by scenes in Calabria, Spain, Provence, Languedoc, Dau-

phiny, Ireland, Bohemia, Saluzzo, and thousands of isolated cities as well as larger tracts of country, and then you may obtain a glimpse of the policy of that Church which represents herself as Catholic and Apostolic, but which the Scripture portrays as "drunk with the blood of the saints." In the chronology of "The Valleys," this year, 1655, stands forth in awful relief with this appalling title, "the year of massacres." God grant that this Church which crumbles at home upon her seven hills, may not strengthen her foundations in Protestant England!

May the auspicious era which has now dawned on new-born Italy, that classic land of Europe, under the auspices of King Victor Emmanuel, shine brighter and brighter, unto the perfect day of peace, liberty, security, and enlightenment!

Reader, in this age of liberalism, our charity is too often granted to the wrongdoer; be just to the sufferers, and form

your own conclusions as to truth and error, based upon the "inexorable logic of facts."

"Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"

"Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

"A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

THE END.

APPENDIX.

CHAPTER VI.

THIS chapter is taken verbatim from Dr. Muston's "Israel of the Alps," vol. i. part 2, chap. vii., and it is hoped will justify the incidental allusions in other parts of this volume. The following is Sir Samuel Morland's introduction (book ii., chap. vi., p. 332) to Chapter VI., in which he recites the notarial depositions of the atrocious details:—

“ I presume the Christian reader is now somewhat prepared by what has been already hinted, with the greater constancy to behold those dolefull spectacles which he shall have here presented before his eys. The truth is, the cruelties which are here related would abundantly exceed the belief of any man (save onely the Authors and Actors of them) were they not accompanied with such Authentick proofs that he who denies the truth of them must at the same time deny his own reason and understanding: for if the formal Attestations of those that were eye-witnesses and bystanders may be of any force with us, if the strong and wofull cries of so many desolate and poor wretches who have been miserably rob'd and bereft of their rela-

tions, houses, lands, and all other comforts, may in any manner gain our belief; in a word, if the formall deposition of one of the chief Commanders of that very Army who were the Actors of those cruelties, signed with his own hand, and that in the presence of two sufficient Witnesses, may perswade us to give any credit to such a relation; Or (which is yet one degree nearer), if the voluntary confession of one of the souldiers themselves, and one who had his own hands embrewed in the bloud of those poor creatures, to some of his Comrades, in a boasting way that he had many times, during the heat of the Massacre, surfetted with eating the boyled Brains of those Barbets (or Protestants); I say, if the voluntary confession of such canibals as these may be accepted as Authentick proofs, then I doubt not but to give ample satisfaction to all, as well to those that fain would not, as those that as yet cannot easily believe such monstrous cruelties, having inserted here as followes the true Copies of the said Depositions and Attestations (which are indeed worthy of being communicated to posterity), and presented the very Original Subscriptions to the publick Library of the famous University of Cambridge."

CHAPTER VII.

This incident (page 62) literally happened to Léger when he made his escape, as also the incident, vol. iii., chap. xxxvii., p. 383, and the one mentioned in vol. i., chap. xvii., p. 201.

CHAPTER VIII.

The incidents of this chapter, as well as the allusions elsewhere to the parchment and certificates,

are founded on the following passage in the Contents of Morland's history :—

“ In the black Boxe marked X are contained the several printed Tickets, and other Papers and Pictures ; which were found in the pockets of some of the souldiers of Piemont, who had before massacred the Protestants :—

Namely,

In the Paper A are several forms of blessing consecrated to be carried about them for preservation ; As for example :—

1. *Potentia Dei Patris, sapientia Dei Fili, virtus Spiritus Sancti, per intercessionem Sanctissimæ Virginis, Dei genitricis Mariæ, Sancti Francisci et Beatorum Didaci, et salvatoris liberet te Dominus ab omni Febre, Peste, et improvisâ morte. Amen.*

2. *Facite homines discumbere, ex Cathed. Casalens, 1649.*

3. *Est puer unus hic, ex Cathed. Casalens, 1648.*

In the Paper B is a certain powder they call *Latte della Madonna* ; or, *The Milk of the Virgin Mary.*

In the Papers C, D, E, F, G, H, I, K are enclosed small pieces of the dead bones of several Martyrs, etc., with the following inscriptions on the back side of the Papers :—

C. *Sancti Justini Virg. Martyr.*

D. *Sancti Lucii Eremitæ.*

E. *Sancti Dindari Martyris.*

F. *Sancti Blasii Episcopi Martyris.*

G. *Sancti Antonii Abbatis.*

H. Sancti Antonni Martyris.

I. Sancti Pancratii.

K. De la Sancta Sepulera.

In the Paper L are the pictures of several saints, as also of Christ and the Virgin Mary, among which there is one remarkable, whereof the title or superscription is, "Pro Conversione Hæreticorum;" all painted in a bloody colour.

Besides these papers and tickets there are in the said black Box these original pieces :—

1. The Marquess of Pianezza's grant of indemnity, and divers Priviledges to a certain person for renouncing his Religion."

2. The Certificate of Prospero da Tarano, delivered to the Marquess of Pianezza, that the person above-said had certainly abjured his Religion.

These were all sent by Morland to Cambridge, but are now unhappily lost.

As regards the blowing off the heads of the heretics by the insertion and ignition of powder, see Morland, book ii., chap. vi, p. 353, who gives an illustration of the process.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Samuel Vacca was Archdeacon of Saluces, and it was through him that the Protestants were saved from being massacred about 1570.

CHAPTER XXII.

The incident of this chapter is based on the following passage in Morland's history :—

"Pietro Simond of Angrogna, about fourscore

years of age, was tied neck and heels together and violently hurled down vast and formidable precipices, but as he was falling down he by the way met with a cragged branch of a tree and there hung fast in a most languishing condition for several dayes together (a most lamentable spectacle to behold!) not being able to help himself in the least, nor, indeed, capable of the help of any other, by reason it was a precipice altogether inaccessible: I leave the reader to make out the rest of this tragedy, confessing myself not able to express it."

The incidents connected with Janavel are historic, and from the position of the valley it is quite possible to see what is taking place on the opposite ridges.

It is the habit of the Waldenses to meet once a year, on the 15th August, on some spot consecrated by religion, history, and tradition. The gathering took place at Pian Pra (the spot on which the combat mentioned in chapter xxii., p. 218, occurred) in August, 1860, when 2000 were assembled. A paper is printed illustrating the special incident which is the subject of commemoration. The following is the heading of the one alluded to above:—

"Quelques Traits De la vie De Janavel suivis de Chants, préparés pour le service de Prière et d'Action de Graces célébré à Pian Pra Le 15 août 1860."

The incidents connected with the sack of Rora, the capture of Janavel's wife, Pianesse's letter and Janavel's answer, are all historic. (Chap. xxvi., xxx.)

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Correctly speaking it was not until 1663 that

Milton was brought into connexion with Chalfont St. Giles, but when there he might naturally stroll up to Gerrard's Cross Common, as represented in the text. In 1663 the plague raged in London, and Ellwood received Milton into his house at Chalfont St. Giles, Buckinghamshire, where he finished his "Paradise Lost." The house is still standing.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The letter in the text, as well as the other Latin letters of Cromwell, were the composition of Milton. The originals, in the handwriting of the Poet's second daughter, Mary Milton, are preserved in the State Paper Office. The translation in the text is from Morland, book iv., chap. iv., p. 572. The following is his heading:—

"A Letter from His Highness the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, &c., To the Duke of Savoy, in the behalf of his poor distressed subjects professing the Reformed Religion in the Valleys of Piemont.

"An Authentick Copy of the true Original whereof was communicated to the Author by the Right Honourable Mr. Secretary Thurloe."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The translation of Du Petit Bourg's letter is from Morland, book ii., chap. vi., p. 333. The following is its heading as it stands in his history:—

"The Declaration of M. du Petit Bourg, first Captain of the Regiment of Grancey, touching the

Cruelties that were exercised upon persons of all ages and sexes among the poor Protestants of the Valleys of Piemont, subscribed with his own hand at Pignerol, 27 Novemb. 1655, in the presence of two other Commanders.

“The true original whereof is to be seen, together with the rest, in the Publick Library of the famous University of Cambridg.”

Léger's Bible, with its inscription, is mentioned by Dr. Gilly in his “Waldensian Researches,” p. 79. It was then in the possession of Dr. Rennell, Dean of Winchester.

The present Dean of Winchester has kindly informed the Author that the book is not now to be found in the Chapter Library, and he fears that, being private property, it may have been sold. The Author would be glad to receive any information about this venerable relic, and, if possible, rescue it from destruction.

Cromwell ordered a national fast and a general collection to be made for the Vaudois. He headed the list himself with £2000. Efforts were made in each parish of each county of England and Wales, and the sum of £38,241 10*s.* 6*d.* was raised. Morland furnishes us with the particular items. We select one—Buckinghamshire, 180 parishes, £498 2*s.* 3*d.*

According to the original instrument preserved in the State Paper Office, among the distributions are the following :—

“To Mr. John Leger, their chiefe minister, who

has been eminently active from the beginning, and whose expenses are very great by reasons of his daily entertainments of all sorts of people who come to him about business, £100.

“Item among the chief commanders, £100 ; whereof £40 may be to Capⁿ Gianavel.”

Of this money, £21,908 0s. 3*d.* was spent in 1655 in relieving their distress, and £16,333 10s. 3*d.* was placed to their credit in the English treasury, but when Charles II. came to the throne he refused to be liable for the debts of a usurper, and squandered it upon his own infamous pleasures.

Another terrific massacre in 1686 succeeded, and in 1689, after their general expatriation, some of them returned to their country in great distress, whereupon William and Mary contributed £500 a year for the relief and support of their clergy. This benefaction continued until 1797, when Napoleon annexed Piedmont to France, and the English annuity was withdrawn.

At the termination of the war in 1814, Wilberforce used all his influence to obtain a renewal of the grant, but without success, but through the exertions of Dr. Gilly it was restored in 1827, and they are now in receipt of £277 annually from the British Government. Besides this, £292 is annually transmitted from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, being interest on £10,000 collected under the patronage of George III.

In the last report of the “Table” (May, 1863), the items stand —

Subsides réguliers.

National Anglais,	Fr. 8133 10
Royal Anglais,	6933 76
Fonds Gilly,	6256 25

The following is the Rev. R. Burgess' explanation of the above items :—

“ No. 1 is the interest of the capital recovered by the exertions of the late Dr. Gilly and Sir R. H. Inglis from the original Cromwell fund.

No. 2 is a grant made in the time of George III., and is designated in the report of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, that society being trustee for the said grant or collection.

No. 3 is a fund raised by the late Dr. Gilly, and which the Waldensian Committee of London holds in trust for the Vandois Church.

None of these resources can properly be said to be from the English Government. The Exchequer has always refused to refund the £10,000 collected under Cromwell for reasons which the Administration considers sufficient.”

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